Opposition closer to final split; Ping files bid today

Story on Front A3

No way, GMA says on NPA campaign fee

NOT even a centavo. President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said there could not pay a "permit-to-campaign" fee being demanded by communist rebels on all candidates in the upcoming elections.

"That is extortion.

NO NEWS A3

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Auditor, son killed in blast ACROSS/A17
- China steps up SARS alert WORLD/A11
- Q4 growth seen at 4.4% BUSINESS/B1

email: headsup@inquirer.com.ph

Monday, December 29, 2003 • 24 pages / vol. 19 / no. 21

Prosecutors fear Estrada won't return

STATE prosecutors yesterday vowed to block deposed President Joseph Estrada from leaving for a medical trip to the United States next month, fearing he may not return to face corruption charges.

The prosecutors said they would ask the Sandiganbayan today to reverse its ruling last week granting Estrada a three-month release from detention to seek medical treatment, special prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said.

"The Sandiganbayan has no jurisdiction in the United States. Once Erap is out of the country, the conditions imposed by the court are nothing because they are no longer covered by US law," Villa-Ignacio said, referring to Estrada's ex-home.

The anti-graft court last week granted Estrada's petition to seek surgery for his arthritic knees in California on humanitarian grounds.

It said Estrada may leave as early as January but should return by the end of March to continue his trial for corruption. The 66-year-old former President, ousted in a military-backed popular revolt, stands accused of plundering national coffers of some $80 million.

Estrada has denied the allegations and maintains he was illegally ousted.

PAGES 2 TO 5 AND A15

'Zigzag' alters course, spares Southern Leyte

By Joey A. Gallaga
PDI Visayas Bureau
and Norman Bordadora

TACLOBAN CITY—Leyte province yesterday heaved a sigh of relief after tropical depression "Zigzag" weakened into a low pressure area and changed course, sparing Southern Leyte that was hit 10 days ago by killer landslides triggered by heavy rains.

As of Sunday morning, Zigzag was howling toward Tagbilaran City in Bohol with sustained winds of 55 km per hour, according to Tacloban weather forecaster Vicente Dadole. With the change of direction, Eastern Visayas is now free from the threats of Zigzag, according to Dadole.

Because the threats had passed, 3,000 passengers stranded Saturday at the ferry terminal in Ramogong Luce, Allen, Northern Samar were allowed to return to Matnog, Sorsogon, en route to Metro Manila yesterday morning. They were on board 20 buses and light vehicles.

STORIES A6

SOLDIERS carry a wheelchair woman as aid workers from Germany arrive at the airport in Bam City, about 1,000 km southeast of Tehran. The death toll in Iran's earthquake has been raised at 28,000—more than 20,000 people injured, the interior ministry said in a statement on Saturday. AP

Int'l aid pours in for Iranian victims

Foreign rescuers rush to find quake survivors

BAM, Iran—Foreign rescue teams with sniffer dogs joined Iranians in the rush to save anybody still alive Sunday, two days after an earthquake reduced most of this city to rubble and killed thousands of people.

More than 40 foreign planes have landed in Iran bearing aid and rescue workers for the stricken people of Bam. But hunting was also reported Sunday as hungry people raided those shops still standing for food.

The scale of the devastation made it difficult to give an accurate death toll, but Iran's interior ministry has estimated 20,000 deaths and officials working in Bam have said it could rise to 40,000.

"More than 10,000 bodies have been pulled out of the rubble," Brig. Gen. Hasan Rastegarpanah of the Revolutionary Guards said Sunday. The elite guards are the largest single organization taking part in the relief operation.

"Out of a total of 7,000 injured, around 2,000 have died," he said.

The city of 80,000 people was asleep when the earthquake of magnitude 6.6, according to the US Geological Survey, struck early Friday morning.

Many countries have flown aid and rescue workers into Iran. The Associated Press saw rescue teams from Austria, Azerbaijan, Britain, Finland, Germany, Russia and Turkey going over the remains of flattened homes Sunday. Several teams had sniffer dogs.

Reports say people buried in the rubble with access to air can normally survive up to 72 hours, but there have been cases of people living longer.

Two US planes landed in Kerman, the local provincial capital, early Sunday, said the spokesperson for the provincial governor's office, Saeed Hasanzadeh. The aircraft were carrying food and other aid.

They were the first American planes to land in Iran in more than a decade. The United

ARTICLE A11

A 10-YEAR-OLD Iranian boy rides on a boat with his family as they take the cemetery in Bam to make their way to Bam. AP

Only 7 CPP cadres disciplined for bloody purges

THEIR PHOTO, taken on May 12, 1989, shows soldiers digging at a suspected mass grave of CPP purge victims in a village in Candol, Lagaña. MANUEL SANTOS

By Jose V. Sarmiento Jr.
(Fourth of five parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

SOME former senior cadres of the Communist Party of the Philippines admit accountability for the anti-infiltration campaigns that killed hundreds of its members and supporters in the 1980s.

However, they declined to be identified for legal reasons.

The CPP also acknowledges that certain people still with the party are culpable, but does not name them.

Some of those involved in the purges have died. A number are living abroad.

A former senior united front cadre considers the accountability in philosophical terms.

"I feel a great sense of moral responsibility during midnight reflections. It saddens me. It's a big sin," said the former cadre, who claimed to have "reflected long and deeply" about Operation Missing Link (OPML), the mass purge against suspected guerrilla sleeper agents in Southern Tagalog.

"I don't know if it could be akin to the Christian concept of original sin, though," said the former cadre, who was in Southern Tagalog in 1986.

Like the others, the ex-cadre acknowledged that all party officials involved in the OPML were accountable, but said: "Malalaqui ang responsibility ng nanununo (The leaders bear a heavy responsibility)."

The former cadre has resolved not to be quiet the next time a similar situation arises: "I won't keep silent because I know it is wrong. I will have to speak up.

CONT. A10

Victims, kin invoke int'l laws

By Jose V. Sarmiento Jr.

THE MOTHER of a victim of the anti-infiltration campaigns of the Communist Party of the Philippines does not expect to find justice for her son.

"I activists Nida Blanca (who was murdered in 2001) cannot get justice, what more poor people like us? I am old and I will just leave it to God," said Illana Ignacio, 77.

But not all families of the purge victims feel this way. They are banking on international standards in their quest to hold the perpetrators accountable.

Solimen M. Santos Jr., regional director for Asia of the humanitarian organization Geneva Call, said the purges were yet another argument that human rights-related obligations for "non-state actors" like rebel groups.

According to Santos, the notion underlying the anti-infiltration campaigns that "spies have no rights" partly explains the human rights violations that occurred.

"On the contrary," he said, "even wartime spies have rights under international humanitarian law."

The purpose of international humanitarian law is to minimize or prevent harm to and suffering of civilians and other persons not directly taking part in hostilities.

There are practical reasons for using international law standards in pursuing the accountability of armed groups.

Armed groups reject national

VICTIMS A10

RP workers' kids form savers' club

By Ma. Corsa P. Dupa

"WE WERE like the poor in fall," quipped Arlyn Ortiles, a young daughter of an overseas Filipino worker (OFW).

Not that she wished the economy would slide further. "What we want is for the peso coins to continuously fall into our coin banks."

In San Pablo City in Laguna and Malolos town in Bulacan, children of OFWs have formed the Batang Alkansya Savers Club, their way of showing appreciation for their parents' sacrifices.

Nothing warms the heart of OFWs more than to come home and see the fruits of their efforts put to good use by their families, even in their absence. And their own children leading the way.

Nothing is more demeaning than to find out that all that slaving away on foreign land has been all for naught. Some heartbreakers: money wasted for useless luxuries, disinvolved families, and children not finishing

STORY A10

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Opposition closer to final split

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE OPPOSITION inches closer towards "splitsville" today with Sen. Panfilo Lacson, the first of its two aspirants for the presidency in the May 2004 polls, filing his certificate of candidacy.

"Once we file, take note we [are likely to be holding hands]," Lacson's political adviser Angelino Baraoas said in a phone interview.

The Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino is split between Lacson and Senate pres. Franklin Drilon, with party president Sen. Edgardo Angara supporting the move actand secretary general Rep. Agapito "Boy" Aquino backing Lacson.

But said the running mate are expected to file their COCs between 1 and 4, according to his spokesperson, Sen. Vicente Sotto III.

Some yesterday said their new party formed Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), chaired by Angara, would announce its candidates for vice-president and senators this week.

On the other hand, Lacson has yet to choose his running mate and the rest of his lineup, according to Baraoas, who is also the spokesperson for the Ang Lacson-Sin President Movement.

"We wanted to talk with PVI first, but communication lines have been cut off," Baraoas said.

Even deposed President Joseph Estrada can't be ruled out, with Lacson and Pro together in one last attempt to have a single slate for the opposition.

So far, three personalities are being eyed on Lacson's running mate, including Metro Manila Development Authority chair Bayani Fernando. Baraoas identified the two others as an opposition senator and a Cabinet official, said said Lacson had talked with one of the three.

LDP colleagues led by reputed Representative Cecilia Padilla, Gilbert Remulla and Abby Bapilar, as well as some 3,000 supporters are set to accompany Lacson to the Comelec offices in Intramuros. They are scheduled to gather as early as 7 a.m. at the nearby Plaza Rizal, where the senator will first address them.

But where Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, whom the senator will first address them.

But where Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, who is expected to run for reelection, will be is another question mark.

Lacson's camp has been claiming that the senator will be joining the LDP ticket, but Estrada has yet to announce his decision.

GMA heaps praises on El Shaddai leader

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday welcomed her "all the way" decision at the annual Christmas gathering of the El Shaddai members where she honored sportscaster-influencer Mike Velarde.

After telling the El Shaddai flock, that she always prayed to the Lord for reconciliation and unity to make the country more progressive and more competitive among developing countries in Asia, the President heaped praise on Velarde for his leadership qualities and business acumen.

In a statement, the President lauded the initiative of Velarde for being "a true public leader and successful real estate developer for providing low-cost housing not only to his members but also to the low-income nonmember directorate."

"Which is a much sought-after endorsee in politics considering his strong influence on his flock whose number runs in the millions. The President had already lost a crucial backer in Sen. Eddie Villanueva of the Jesus is Lord Movement who has decided to run in next year's presidential derby after being hot up with politician's simply premium for decades.

In her message, delivered close to midnight Saturday, the Macapagal said, "Help me achieve true reconciliation for the sake of our country and the Filipino people. This is what I pray and work for."

Reconciliation has been her rallying cry since she announced her plan to run in next year's presidential elections. She stressed her plan to all political organizations "to help her achieve true reconciliation effort."

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo joins Brother Mike Velarde and his El Shaddai flock for a Christmas celebration Saturday night.

NPA call to arms hit

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE CHAIR of the House committee on national defense yesterday chided the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines for calling for insurrection amidst ugoing the government despite peace overtures by authorities.

Rep. Prospero Pichay of Surigao del Sur urged communist rebels on the ground to immediately reject this chance for more violence and opt for peace instead.

Pichay said the latest call by CPP central committee chair Armando Liwanag for the start of guerrilla offensive was insensitive, because many people are still suffering from the pain of the communist leader who had been talking with the government to find a peaceful settlement of the armed struggle in the country.

He said that while the government was remiss in forging a peace agreement with the communist rebels, those in the leadership hierarchy of the party were not.

Pichay said Liwanag and other members of the communist organization should support the move for an extended ceasefire until after the May elections in wend of advocating for an extension of the guerrilla fronts to the majority of towns, especially those in the strategic parts of the country.

"It would also be to the CPP-NPA's interest to support the holding of peaceful and orderly elections in May considering that numerous party-list organizations' slots are allied with the left wing also expected to win elections," said the congressman.

Assistant Majority Leader Benjamin Bautista (Bataan), Appointments Secretary Ronaldo Puno (Chief of Staff), Antonio Nachura (Solicitor General), Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr., Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, Trade Secretary Peter Favila, Tourism Secretary Ace Durano, Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Public Works Secretary Florante Soriano III, Science and Technology Secretary Estrella Alabastro, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman, Tourism Secretary Joseph Durano, Trade Secretary Peter Favila, Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Presidential Adviser on Peace Process Jesus Dureza, Presidential Adviser on Overseas Filipino Concerns Rafael Seguis, Presidential Adviser on Entrepreneurship Joseph Ejercito Estrada, Presidential Adviser on Flagship Programs Ramon Ang, Presidential Adviser on Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council Jose Mari Gonzalez, Presidential Adviser on Poverty Alleviation Esperanza Cabral, Presidential Adviser on Trade and Industry Cesar Purisima, Presidential Adviser on Tourism Ace Durano, Presidential Adviser on Environment Angelo Reyes, Presidential Adviser on Interior Ronaldo Puno, Presidential Adviser on Justice Raul Gonzalez, Presidential Adviser on Labor Patricia Sto. Tomas, Presidential Adviser on Public Works Florante Soriano III, Presidential Adviser on Science and Technology Estrella Alabastro, Presidential Adviser on Social Welfare Corazon Soliman, Presidential Adviser on Tourism Joseph Durano, Presidential Adviser on Trade Peter Favila, Presidential Adviser on Transportation and Communications

'Zigzag' alters course, spares Southern Leyte

From page A1

But the weather bureau's warning of possible landslides and flash floods in effect prior to midnight is still due to the southwest to shear into the low-pressure area now expected to bring worse Visayas.

Aurora Fernandez-Antonio, officially dean of landslide and flash flood advocates from Baguio for the expected moderate to heavy rains over Bohol, Southern Cebu, Southern Negros, Misamis Oriental, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur and Basilan," Pagasa's weather bulletin issued at 4:30 a.m. yesterday.

"Residents in these provinces, especially in low-lying areas and near mountain slopes are advised to be on alert against possible flash floods and landslides. Coastal waters in these areas will be moderate to rough and still dangerous for small fishing boats," it said.

Shut down

President Benigno Aquino III's shut down a disaster command center as the presidential guest house inside 24 hours after the cabinet it put up in preparation for Zigzag.

At a briefing, Mr Benigno said the command center was closed after Zigzag had weakened and passed the critical areas of the Visayas and Mindanao yesterday morning without any major threat.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, chair of the National Disaster Coordinating Council, said first monitoring of Zigzag would continue round the clock at the management center in Camp Aguinaldo and other regions.

The command centers which the President personally took charge of, was established on concerns that Zigzag might trigger more landslides in Southern Leyte and other areas where the soil had been loosened by torrential rains the previous week.

The President, who ordered a mass evacuation of areas in Zigzag's path on Saturday, evening, insisted then that the use of the command center as early as 3 a.m. yesterday to oversee operations including Zigzag's path.

"Because of our preparations, we have avoided any casualties," the President said.

Mapping

The Philippine Mine Bureau of Mines and Geo-Sciences Bureau Director Leonardo Jasareno said the agency had been mapping in vulnerable areas for some years now, to enable its landslides Provinces Island, Bagul, Quezon City and Marikina City Landslide, Surigao City and Iligan, Mindanao, and Marikina towns in Mindanao (and) flooding (Butuan City, Davao, Leyte and Cagayan de Oro City).

Residents in low-lying and coastal barangays in the towns of San Francisco, San Ricardo and Liloan in Southern Leyte, who were relocated Saturday to safe ground, returned home yesterday.

Barangays Poblacion in Liloan, Pondol in San Francisco, and Poblacion in San Ricardo were devastated by landslides on Dec. 25 and 26 following days of torrential rains. The landslides left about 154 persons dead and 47 injured in Southern Leyte, according to the Office of Civil Defense (Ocd) in Eastern Visayas.

Administrator Pangan, OCD regional director, said the landslides also resulted in the destruction of close to P40 million worth of crops and infrastructure.

Total damage to crops, which included rice, banana and coconut, was placed at P33.69 million. Damage to infrastructure, including the road network connecting Liloan and San Francisco, was placed at P20.1 million. With a report from the Philippine News Agency

YOUNG members of the Barangay Ambiks Savers Club show off their passbooks.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ATTY. ANNA MA. LIZA ANTONIO

RP workers' kids form savers' club

From page A1

ordered, OFWs coming home as poor as when they left.

"Wala na palang kuwenta (It means nothing at all)," is a sad refrain we often heard.

But with value formation and continuous consciousness-raising, the children of OFWs could easily be motivated to do their part to make their parents' sacrifices abroad worthwhile.

The Barangay Ambiks Savers Club was formed in August with the assistance of Ambiks, a cooperative savers' organization which provides economic and psychosocial services to OFWs and their families. (Ambiks is "Ating-Ambisyon" means to save.)

The club now has 110 members, composed of children and young teenagers.

Milk cans

When the children first came up with the savings concept, they asked: "What do we have here in Bislaan that we could use as coin banks?" At first, they thought of the native bamboo as alkansiya. But then, for the saved coins to be taken out, the bamboo will have to be cracked open. What a waste of wealth!

The children thought of something more practical and readily available. One said, "What about tin cans? My mother sells kalamansi and she has lots of discarded Ambiks milk cans."

The children took on the suggestion. Instead of putting the saved tin in the middle of the lid, they around the lid against halfway and folded in a way that the coins could go in and out easily. The coin banks would come in red, yellow and blue, the colors of their Ambiks identification cards, with the Ambiks Savers logo which the children treated them colors.

One very young member said it well on behalf of all the members: "We realized that we could do a lot to show our appreciation for our parents' sacrifices abroad. We have to value our money. We used to be careless, now we understand the value of discipline and saving. We are lucky that we have found the key to our future concerns."

The children keep their savings in the milk cans and have loan them over to junior volunteers who deposit the money in the Ambiks office. A saver could make a minimum deposit of P20.

Transactions are reflected in the savings passbook. A P100 saving earns 3 percent yearly interest.

Ambiks executive director Mat Alcantara said the children's savings were pooled so that they could earn higher interest rates. Fifty percent of the pooled savings is invested in the Ambiks-owned Bong Go savings and credit cooperative for OFWs' families) and 50 percent is in time deposits.

So far, Alcantara is happily surprised, as our has made any withdrawal. "Save long stay save."

Designing the logo

Money was not all that was in the savers' minds. The children wanted to create a logo that would be meaningful.

One logo chosen is a child saving in a safe of Ambiks' kind. Another was that of an airplane dropping coins. Still another showed children and their parents holding hands and forming a circle. The three creations were merged to form the Barangay Ambiks Savers Club logo.

Joel Bonifer Molinos and Cheryl Balangcas "It is our belief that the institution of the future also lies in our own little hands."

Ivy Joy Jan and Angelica Hernandez wrote a short essay titled "How is my passbook for my dream." They said, "We were happy that we took part in the Young Ambiks (on savings). We met and made new friends. We were one in the thought that we could be of help to our parents who are working abroad. We could discipline ourselves and save money.

"We were asked to design the (passbook logo). We wanted it to be different and stand out. It was exciting. It was so nice to see everybody involved in the work, from our coordinator, others wrote and drew.

"Here in this passbook lies all our colors. Here in this passbook lies our aspirations and dreams. Together with other children we will make our dreams come true."

Women's center

Administrator Atty. Hermilia Bilog and Ambiks project head Ivan Gil say with San Pedro's city government to boost programs for the OFW sector. The local government, through Mayor Vicente Agaton and the city council, has offered a 1.5-room building that would house services for the OFW and the women sector. (Agaton was the district's congressman when Ebro Constantino, an OFW, was hanged in Singapore.)

A memorandum of agreement has been signed between the parties concerned. The city council for OFW affairs has also been formed.

Government agencies have pledged services for the center's operations while the Ambiks people have pledged financial assistance for the center's completion.

The building will be dedicated to those women who made overseas employment on the days of countless OFWs.... Kasibulan and Ambiks founder Gaia Alonzo-Medgar, OFWs Rubie-Liz Medrano and Constantino, Marilyn died early this year, while Martinez died in 1999. Both died of cancer. Constantino's hanging created a national furor.

Their sacrifices have not been in vain.

SPORTS

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Editor Teddyboy S. Holmstrom
Assistant Editor Edwin H. Villanueva

BASKETBALL: NBA Guide (Ed. on Labels, 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.) — Box Scores, Memo to Users: Time to...

Celtics 7 p.m. (MCC)—Boston and Cal...

rotary while Cleveland hosts Portland.

OLYMPIA-MCC Ed. to : Sites Sports— Corrections (see also) in one of the subheads under...

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

PBA HOPEFULS

De Ocampo to head big men in draft

By Jonn Navarro

MORE than a dozen more Philippine Basketball Association aspirants are anticipated to come in and enter today's deadline for the Annual Rookie Draft on Jan. 18 at the Glorietta Activity Center.

Among the aspirants names expected to submit their applications are big men Wesley De Ocampo, Jervy Teves and Mac Pingris, all members of the IE men's basketball team that won the gold recently in the Southeast Asian Games in Pittsburg.

There will however, be one undrafted rookie in Ryan Arana, who was released by Red Bull after the 2003 Philippine Cup.

The list will add up to the 24 early birds who submitted their applications Some as early as last week.

Aside from the aforesaid players, collegiate stars Jason Cabilao (UE), Biagene Saco (FEU), Carlo Sharma (ADU), Mennel Bunsis (DLSU), Arnold Bonleo (UE), Ronald Cuan (DLSU), Chris Domingo (UPIMT), Philip Wilson (DLSU), Robert Onofre (PCU), Brenson Franco (PCU) and Alvin Pua (SBC) have joined the fresh.

Only two new Filipino players—Joachim Gomez Thesis and Richard Peter Bautista Bitchon—have turned their list into the rookie pool, the lowest turnout of Filipino players in the history of foreign-bound aspirants since 1997.

Other hopefuls are playmaker Ahamed Hardar of the now-defunct Metropolitan Basketball Association's Bogota Huskies, former Letran Knight Francis Arnaiz and retired taekwondo jin Arvin Garcia. Tinsmaker Hardaine Jr., Lyndon Lagat and Jim Joseph Sidmundo.

The 12-ball Turbochargers have secured the top pick while the Pearldealer '23 Holdings and the Bedda Express will select second and third overall, respectively.

PINGRIS, rookie at 6-foot-4, will be right rewards in the PBA draft.

MCC Non-Master starts today

THE MCC Non-Master chess tournament, with all or 9 a.m. today at the South floor of BF Homes Bldg., at #367 Aurora Blvd. beside St. Joseph Church and near LRT 2 Araneta Station in Quezon District, Quezon City.

The two-day event is open to all amateurs, unrated and rated players, regardless of age and sex.

It will employ the seven-round Swiss System and time control of 60 minutes per player to finish the long three-hundred-order will ensure the following cash prizes: champion—P5,000; second—P2,000; third—P1,500; fourth—P1,000 and fifth—P750.

Interested parties are advised to register in the event before the tournament starts. For details, call SEC at 826-0565 and 0631-2369.

Datu posts 5th straight chess win

Standings after round 5
GM Jayson Gonzales 5
GM Rogelio Antonio Jr. 4.5
GM Eugene Torre, NM Rodel Naranja, Jr., Ronald Bancod, Jayson Gonzales, Jan Emmanuel Garcia, Jan Jayson Gonzales, Jan Jayson Gonzales, Jan Jayson Gonzales

Naia still on SARS alert

By Arnaldo Pope

SECURITY officials of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport assured the public yesterday that they're equipped to detect suspected cases of the known acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) after China reported the other day its first suspected SARS case since July.

Naia assistant general manager for security services Angel Sevilla said that when SARS hit Asia earlier this year, they diverted passengers from China, Taiwan and Hongkong to one through Gates 1 to 7 at the second wing of the NAIA, making it easy to detect suspected victims.

"We have the thermal cameras in place there. All medical personnel have already been on alert, so we will know if anyone is infected," Sevilla said. He added that the NAIA has not lowered its SARS alert even when the fatal intestinal disease subsided in Asia last July.

A 32-year-old man from the southern city of Guangzhou in China was reported to have checked into a hospital last week with a headache and a fever. He was later transferred to a quarantine ward.

Earlier this month, Taiwan officials reported their a 44-year-old scientist working on the virus had become the latest SARS case.

Supreme Court of the Philippines
Judicial and Bar Council
Manila

Announcement

The Judicial and Bar Council announces the opening of the position of **ASSOCIATE JUSTICE** of the **SANDIGANBAYAN** which was vacated by Justice Rodolfo G. Palattao, who retired on December 14, 2003.

In case of recommendation, the recommendee shall confirm with the recommendation, which recommendation shall be submitted NOT LATER THAN THURSDAY, 15 JANUARY 2004 to the JBC Secretariat.

The applications / recommendations must be addressed, NOT LATER THAN THURSDAY, 15 JANUARY 2004, to:

The Secretariat, Judicial and Bar Council
Second Floor, Centennial Building
Supreme Court, Padre Faura, Manila

22 December 2003

LUZVIMINDA D. PUNO
Clerk of Court
Ex-Officio Secretary

LABAN NG DEMOKRATIKONG PILIPINO (LABAN)

Unit A, 10th Floor, Washington Tower, Asiaworld Complex, Aguinaldo Boulevard, Pasonaque City, Philippines
Tels.: 870-5685, 870-3040; Cell: (0917) 648-3735; Fax: 870-5058

THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE LABAN NG DEMOKRATIKONG PILIPINO (LDP)

We, the leaders and members of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP), fully support all the actions taken by our Party Chairman, Senator Edgardo J. Angara to preserve and protect the integrity of the party and unify the opposition under the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP). We hereby state that:

1. As LDP Chairman, Senator Edgardo J. Angara has the sole authority to sign the Certificates of Nomination for the party's official candidates or to designate authorized signatories. The LDP Constitution states that:

   Art 6a Sec 5. The party chairman shall be the chief executive and shall have the sole authority to represent the party in all external matters, including the signing of documents.

2. As LDP Chairman, Senator Edgardo J. Angara has the power and authority to place Congressman Agapito "Butz" Aquino on "forced indefinite leave" as Secretary-General of LDP to avoid further confusion in the party:

   Article 6. Sec. 5a (3). the Party Chairman has the power "to act on such extraordinary or emergency matters, especially those not envisioned or foreseen, which cannot await the call and holding of a meeting of the National Congress or the National Executive Council, upon consultation, whenever practicable with other Party leaders.

3. Congressman Rolex T. Suplico has been expelled from the LDP by the party's Regional Governing Body of Region 6 (Western Visayas). The decision was signed by five (5) out of six (6) provincial chairmen and the regional chairman, former Congressman Allen Quimpo.

4. **We are fully behind the formation of KNP, and express our unequivocal support to its standard bearer, Mr. Fernando Poe, Jr.**

All the actions of the party chairman and the Region 6 governing body have been ratified and confirmed by

15 out of the 16 regional chairmen, namely: Board Member Edgardo Zamparo, *Region 1*; Vice-Governor Oscar Pagsibigan, *Region 2*; Vice-Governor Ramon Lachson and Mr. Raul Ople, *Region 3*; Congressman Joaquin "Jun" Chipeco, Jr., *Region 4*; Governor Jesus Pimentel, *Region 5*; Congressman Allen Quimpo, *Region 6*; Congressman Mike Romero, *Region 7*; Congressman Bob Lorelo, *Region 8*; Governor Antonio Cuilegan, *Region 10*; Board Member Carlo Rabat, *Region 11*; Atty. Augustus Velarde, *Region 12*; Governor Valentino Plaza, CARAGA; Mr. Asmad Tamarcis, ARMM; Governor Ruldeseo Dollesgas, CAR; Congressman Dondon Bagatsing, NCR; and

36 out of 40 members of the National Executive Council.

This is the LDP, and we have spoken.

Attested by:

ENRIQUE A. ZALDIVAR
Acting Secretary General

Spies keep most of RP 'jueteng'-free, claims Ebdane

By Christine N. Esguerra

WITH the country now mostly "cleared" of jueteng, the Philippine National Police has moved to maintain this unprecedented situation.

PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. has deployed several police units nationwide to spy on field commanders whose jurisdictions might still have intermittent operations of the illegal numbers game.

Deputy Director General Victor Gil, PNP chief for operations, yesterday used the deployment near Ebdane's map of enforcing his "one strike" policy against officers who would renege on their responsibilities in the government-sanctioned illegal gambling campaign.

"This is very serious," he told the Inquirer. "Imagine a regional director getting kind of (or just one) successful raid in his area of responsibility."

The "spy team," composed of Camp Crame officers handpicked by Ebdane for the job, was expected to regularly apprise the PNP chief on the conduct of the anti-gambling drive, including "guerrilla type" operations where operators move from one place to another to avoid arrest.

As of last Friday, the PNP's nationwide campaign had resulted in the arrest of 12,000 small-time operators and the confiscation of cash bets amounting to P675,000 during raids in Metro Manila, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Western Visayas, and Western and Southern Mindanao.

Curiously, Ebdane had announced in a press conference that all for-police chiefs (ferries to Metro Manila had featured their respective jurisdictions "jueteng free" after consulting with local religious leaders. Four days after the announcement, Ebdane's men staged a raid in Quezon City.

The raid was another proof that eliminating the decades-old jueteng in the country was much more difficult than it may have appeared in the eyes of Ebdane. Having declared "99 percent" of all provinces and municipalities "jueteng free," the PNP chief vowed to root out the illegal numbers game by Christmas. He gave no update on the operations on Christmas Day.

Despite the apparent setback, Gil yesterday maintained that eliminating jueteng was still possible "in the coming weeks" especially with Ebdane's latest "one-strike" policy.

"Let's not be quick to judge (the campaign)," he said. "Let's give it a chance and hope that it will succeed."

The formula against jueteng was actually simple, he claimed. "There will be no jueteng as long as police will not allow it."

Citing his experience at the Cordillera region where he was regional director in 2000, Gil claimed his jurisdiction was awarded for having no jueteng operation simply because he refused to yield to pressures coming from big-time operators.

Even if local government officials tolerate jueteng, he said the illegal numbers game would not thrive in an area if police officers reject it.

"There really has to be a coexistence between local politicians and policemen," he explained. "It's very difficult for local politicians to exclusively tolerate (jueteng) because policemen will always get in the way."

EBDANE

'Jueteng' dead in GMA's home province, for now

CAMP OLIMA, Pampanga—Jueteng operations in Pampanga stopped for three straight days since Dec. 23 in Pampanga, a strong hint of the illicit numbers game in the last 20 years, police reportedly.

In the City of San Fernando, 5 km north of this regional police camp, at least three restaurants fronting as fast food/ice cream stores sold only the usual reading fare.

Cabu (chief bet collectors) were not seen on their usual rounds on Saturday. Collectors were not seen carrying their standard jueteng paraphernalia like wads in sheet of previous winning numbers and payables (sheets of paper where bets are recorded).

In at least four middle-class villages in the city, collections stopped, gathering bets or announcing the winning pairs of numbers. In the three-digit drawn (2) by "2D" or "Swerte."

"Jueteng operations have really stopped," said Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mayaen, Pampanga provincial director.

Earlier, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., Philippine National Police chief, ordered his men to stop jueteng on or before Christmas Day.

Records from the Central Luzon police said 28 people were arrested in what could have been the last raids held in the City of San Fernando and in the towns of Sta. Ana, Minalin, Mexico, Mabalacat and Macabebe.

Mayaen said only "guerrilla-type" operations related to Pampanga, the home province of President Macapagal-Arroyo, between Dec. 13 and 24.

Like Mayaen, police directors in Nueva Ecija, Bataan, Bulacan, Metro Manila, Tarlac and Zambales reported that their areas were "jueteng-free."

Chief Supt. Vidal Quiocel, Central Luzon police director, denied reports that police held a secret covenant with jueteng financiers to suspend the game indefinitely.

As of last March, a report obtained by the Inquirer showed there were at least 19 financiers in the region. No one has been arrested in the fresh crackdown though.

Senior Supt. Lauro Paloma, Nueva Ecija police director and jueteng in his province stopped because the "series of raids ordered by allowed" the operations in the municipals and financiers "voluntarily decided" to stop the game.

Sources in the police and jueteng bet collectors claimed that jueteng operations were temporarily suspended and in retaliation, based on their experiences, was "absence of the presence of those in political power." Rancho Ortaja, PDEA chief Lauro Enik, and Abdulah Mendie, PNP Northern Luzon director.

Police firearms muzzled

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

A HEART-TO-HEART talk.

That is the method which Caloocan City police chief Bernardo Montalo hopes to try to discourage his men from firing their guns during the New Year celebration.

He told the Inquirer yesterday that he would have a "heart-to-heart talk" with his men on today's inspection at the city's police stations.

On 12midnight Day, five policemen from the city's Task Force Sharik were arrested for allegedly firing their guns in front of a store.

The policemen, who were reportedly drunk, even resisted arrest and wounded a fellow policeman and a 20-year-old man.

The National Capital Regional Police Office (NCRPO) has earlier warned policemen against indiscriminately firing their guns to welcome the New Year.

In the past, innocent people, including children, were killed or injured by stray bullets fired during holiday celebrations.

Thus, the NCRPO ordered the five police districts in the metropolis to "conduct a thorough inspection of personnel and their respective firearms before Dec. 31 and immediately thereafter."

NCRPO Director Romulo de Leon said yesterday that he was studying the re-implementation of wrapping the muzzles of policemen's guns with masking tape to make sure that these do not see the heavens unlawfully.

Northern Police District Director Marcelino Pedazo doubted whether taping the muzzles of policemen's guns would be enough to stop them from greeting the New Year with blasts from their firearms.

He said proper information dissemination and strict inspection would help.

Sherwin also said that what was more important was the commitment of policemen to set good examples.

Policemen who would be proven guilty of violating the prohibition face dismissal from the service.

Cop arrested by fellow cop

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

THIS is a police story.

A policeman was arrested by fellow policemen in Quezon City after he allegedly pointed a gun at another lawman yesterday morning.

PO2 Jeffrey Leyva, 31, detailed at Camp Crame, was arrested on the complaint of SPO3 Jose Ilao of the Calmo Police Station.

A report from the Central Police District said that at 12:15 a.m., Ilao was driving his jeep along St. Mary Street, Culiat, when Leyva, who was on a motorcycle blocked his way.

Po subdevot witness, Leyva pulled out a .45-caliber pistol and fired three times in the air.

The Camp Crame-based lawman then allegedly pointed the firearm at Ilao.

After the incident, Ilao immediately sought help from the Culiat Police Community Precinct 1.

PO3 Antonio Cisnetros and PO3 Joseph Gapuzan responded and caught up with Leyva.

But the suspect policeman reportedly resisted arrest and even pointed his gun at the policemen.

After a brief negotiation, the Cisnetros and Gapuzan managed to disarm the suspect and arrested him.

Leyva was drunk when the incident happened, case investigator PO2 Reginaldo Inocio said in his report.

METROBRIEFS

Guard found dead

A SECURITY guard of Standard Insurance in Cubao, Quezon City, was found dead on duty early Saturday morning, Police Senior Insp. Jeff Mo. 39, Meeting Road, Lower Bicutan, Taguig, was found lying face down near the post inside the headquarters at 5:15 a.m. Police said the victim was discovered by a police station officer-on-call to patrol the area. Security guard Gino Lopez told the police that she called upon Mateo when she discovered that the bookstore's metal gate was still locked but got no answer. Police said the victim suffered a head wound on the left ear or "temporal." — Maryann Ortiz

Appeal against dismissal

FORMER Manila City Jail Warden Supt. Roman Ojeda has submitted to Quezon City Regional Trial Court his motion for reconsideration of the court's February 2015 decision to dismiss the criminal case against Ojeda for alleged "malfeasance and violation of reasonable and prudence" in connection with the alleged "deliberate and unnecessary killing" of Jakiri Pelino Co, from the Manila City Jail in the New Bilibid Prisons, Muntinlupa. Ojeda claimed the dismissal order's resolution and the order appeal memorandum that called for the immediate implementation of the dismissal were "issued with grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack of jurisdiction." — Tonz Zarate

Ink refilling station robbed

THIEVES on Saturday carried away goods worth about P7 million from an ink refilling station and a neighboring computer appliances store in Caloocan City. Police identified the victimized stores as Shi Int'l Inc Love and The Korean Surplus Outlet, both located on 10th Avenue, Grace Park. Investigators disclosed that the suspects destroyed the plastic roofing of the appliance store, pried it through the ceiling, and got down at the ink station from where connecting the appliance store. — Tonz Zarate

RMMHS Batch '71 reunion

DESARIO Leal Batch '71 of Ramon Magsaysay High School in Espana, Manila, will hold a reunion on April 17, 2004, at the Camp Aguinaldo Officers Club. The reunion, dubbed "TRIBU: A Reunion of Friends," will celebrate the batch's milestone for school years 2004-2005, as well as give recognition to batch members who have excelled in their chosen careers. For details, please call any of the following: Teresa Tejaran-Zuang at (632) 741-40 or (63) 1-6250000, Ed Bello-De Leon at (632) 6500000 or (63) 6-4123002, Alex Alfonso at (632) 4241 or (63) 9 19 9 10 2225, Freddie Mercado at (632) 523-4338, or Jerome Nobel Bandoria at (632) 524-90 19 or (632) 5.

THE BOMB drill's actors and act always crowd. — JEAN CAYCO/CONTRIBUTOR

Bomb drill stumps Divisoria shoppers

By Tarra Quismundo

SIX EXPLOSIONS were heard in the heart of Divisoria Thursday morning.

Shortly after, men in uniform came to rescue dozens of "casualties," and ended off the scene of Soler Street and C.M. Recto Avenue, which terrorists had "attacked."

Yesterday was Police Inspectors, a day when people pulled rules or others, in commemoration of Dr. Biblical escape of the child Jesus from the murderous hunt of King Herod.

And the Western Police District could have fooled everybody when it staged a bomb drill in Divisoria between 2 and 3 p.m.

WPD Director Pedro Bulaong called yesterday's drill exercise as a "bomb simulation with mass casualty."

"This is to show how prepared our police are for a similar emergency situation," Bulaong told the hundreds in a phone interview.

During the drill, emergency response units of the WPD, including the Explosives and Ordnance Disposal Unit, Special Weapons and Tactics Roster of the Crime Office, Manila's Bureau of Fire Protection, mobile patrol cars, paramedics, investigators and bomb technicians, came to full force and poured in the drill.

"We just tested the capability of our response units," related Bulaong.

He said that the drill was part of the WPD's preparation for the New Year's Eve celebration, when people are likely to get injured by firecracker explosions.

Vendors decry steep price rise

By Margaux Ortiz, Ethan Tandoc Jr. and Tarra Quismundo

THE PRICES of goods are too much.

So, that a lot say average market-goer complaining, last-minute rounds serving the rise in the prices of goods.

"We do not expect to make much money," said Gigi Tadeo, 57, who has been selling pork at the Quiapo Market in Manila for 20 years.

She said the price of pork began to rise in the first week of December, when it sold for P125.00/kilo. Currently, it's P125 to P130.

No more buyers

At that price, Tadeo said, most people already stopped buying pork by the kilo. "There are people who buy only by the gram," she explained.

"Before, I used to sell the most of four pigs. Now, I can't even sell one," she exclaimed.

With the slump in sales, some like coach in the retailer's profit, she never dreams, she said she used to earn P500. Now, it's P300.

Another meat dealer, Wilcie Moreno, blame meat suppliers for the price hike.

No clear reason

"We do not understand why the prices have been going up. Dealers tell us that there is a shortage but we don't see any," said Moreno, who gets her meat from Tarlac and Batangas.

The situation is reportedly similar in the case of beef, the price of which now ranges from P160 to P180 in four markets surveyed by the Inquirer.

The markets surveyed were the Guadalupe market in Makati City, Quiapo and Pasay markets in Manila and the Bagong Ilog and Commonwealth markets in Quezon City.

Meanwhile, appealed to the government to investigate the price hike, saying there might a hoarding or meat and meat "cartel at play."

While pork and beef dealers double a shortage was pushing prices up, chicken dealers insist that no "abnormal hike" of supply was putting pressure on the prices of chicken.

Stopped imports

Dealers and retailers blame the government's decision not to import chicken. But some believe that local producers are boosting up to manipulate chicken prices, which now range from P120 to P130.

Even the price of chips, once cushioned by President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to cut the tariff, has gone up by P20 to P45 per kilo.

The prices of fish and vegetables have not escaped the upward trend. Their prices have jumped up by an average of P20 per kilo.

What is aggravating the situation of the retailers are the rise in other expenses, such as transportation and the electricity rate.

Rising costs

Linda, a meat vendor at the Q-Mart, said her stall's daily retail has increased from P352 in November to the current P464.

And their heads are tired.

Zenaida dela Cruz, a fish vendor at the Mart said they could not pick up their prices even if they needed to, "Otherwise no customers will no longer buy." So is Cruz said in Filipino.

Worse, they are the ones who get the blame from consumers.

A chicken vendor at the Q-Mart said they should be the ones to blame, some of whom accuse them of being "opportunists."

Spare tire repair job kills driver

A DRIVER was killed, while a vulcanizing shop helper was injured after the spare tire they were repairing suddenly burst, hitting metal projectile their heads.

Reynaldo Alfonso Serrano, 40, jeepney driver of Greenfield 3, Bonifacio, died of severe head injuries, while helper Erwin Tumolva of the King Tire Supply and Vulcanizing Shop in Quezon Highway is still being treated at the Quezon Hospital, police said yesterday.

Police said Tumolva was replacing the lock of the spare tire on Saturday afternoon when suddenly, the rim burst, sending metal locks and other metal parts flying.

The metal parts crashed onto the victims' heads, police said. Edwin Tandoc Bonifac Jr.

2 firsts scored in 'Gabi ng Parangal'

By Mahmud R. Cruz

TWO "FIRSTS" occurred on last night's "Gabi ng Parangal" of the 25th Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF).

First-time feature film director Rick Meily won as Best Director for "Crying Ladies," about three professional mourners in Chinatown paid to cry during Chinese funerals and festivals.

The film also won the highly coveted best picture award and a cash prize of P500,000.

Another first-time winner was actor Victor Neri, who bagged the best supporting award for his role as the adult Filipinoas in "Filipinas."

Neri beat veteran actors Rudy Fernandez and Rondal Reyes for the best supporting trophy.

Veteran actress Maricel Soriano won the festival's best actress award for her role as the ignorant "Islanda Filipinas in Nice Filmi" family saga "Filipinas," directed by Joel Lamangan.

Soriano beat the likes of Aunor, Rosco, Sharon Cuneta, Jeona Tantiangco and Elizabeth Oropesa for the best actress trophy.

Most awards

Meily's "Crying Ladies," starring megastar Sharon Cuneta, romped off with most of the awards.

Cuneta's Tony Gloria, who also produced the critically acclaimed "American adobo," took a risk on Meily and his unusual, but hilarious, surreal-amusing screenplay "Bayad Luha" on which the movie was based.

The veteran television commercial director told the Inquirer after the awards rites that "I was really nervous (after) seeing Jeffrey Jeturian's 'Bridal Shower.' I (also) knew how good Rick Mom (Mario Po Z) and Jed Lamangan ("Filipinas") are."

Gloria said he is grateful to "two very important persons: Sharon (Cuneta) for taking the challenge in doing something different, and for Meily who wrote a very refreshing story."

"Crying Ladies" also gave scriptwriter Meily the best actor award, Hilda Koronel for best supporting actress award and John Prats the best child actor award.

Top grosser

But that year's top grosser, the love comedy starring Mare Revilla's famous adversary "Captain Barbell," produced by Star Cinema, went home without any award, even in the special effects category in which it was a strong contender for the flying sequences of its masked hero.

"Filipinas" won for Vilma Cinema, composer Antonio Fillipina Cultural Award and a P150,000 cash prize. The film on the struggles of a typical Filipino family was also awarded the third best picture trophy and a P200,000 cash prize.

Boy Iglesias bagged the best screenplay award for "Filipinas."

He also won the best story award along with Regal Films producer Lily Monteverde for "Mano Po 2," the story of a Chinese patriarch with three wives. The movie also bagged the second best picture award and a P300,000 cash prize. It also won the People's Choice award for best picture given by the cellular phone service providers Smart, which held a popular fan survey.

Smart subscribers were asked to vote by text messaging their pick for the People's Choice award for best actor, which Richard Gomez won for his part in "Filipinas," and the People's Choice best actress, which Cuneta bagged for her role in "Crying Ladies."

Ed Peralta's "Mano-mano" was awarded the most gender sensitive film and a cash prize of P500,000 by the Quezon City government. The movie, which shows how a small Filipino community coped with the dreaded Yersinia Pestis Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) also won the best Cinema craig award.

Director Joel Jover Sloane's "Mallahanan," won awards for best visual effects, best sound recording, best editing and best musical score.

Director Tony Reyes' "Fantastic Man," produced by Octoarts Films and 86'er Productions, scored best makeup.

SEXY stars Aubrey Miles and Ara Mina belt out a Tagalog song in their Filipinoana presentation at the awards rites at the Philippine International Convention Center.

FAMOUS. Soriano flies prize for a spinster role in "Filipinas."

VICTOR Neri shows off his trophy as festival's Best Supporting actor for his role in "Filipinas."

MARK Meily. The gamble paid off for the producer of "Crying Ladies."

Robbers hit school

TIGHT watch on banks, stores and shopping malls? Somehow, robbers took advantage of the school break and forged into a high school in Navotas.

About 2:30 p.m., school janitor Rodolfo Avella, 47, went to the Kaunlaran High School in Tugatog-Organiza, Muddy Boy Boulevard, Sitio Looc but much to his dismay that the gate of the school's DPWH building had been forcibly opened.

When he checked inside, he found that the teachers' cabinets and table lockers had been opened and the valuables were taken.

As of press time, police could not give an estimate of the valuables stolen. Edson Catalo Bandao Jr.

Cubao mart stalls razed

ABOUT P800,000 worth of property was lost after a 30-minute fire razed several market stalls in Cubao, Quezon City On the late night.

The fire broke out about 6:30 p.m. in a "barbel" shed house on Eastwood Street, Cubao. Arson and quickly spread to nearby grocery and dry goods stores.

Nobody was reported injured. At least six stalls were burned. Edson Bandao Jr.

MAYORAL BET

Mrs. Imelda Tobias Aguilar (center), election candidate for mayor of Las Pinas, as her husband, Mayor Vergel "Nene" Aguilar (in red shirt) and other town officials look on.

The WORLD

Edna Lorraine B. Gueco

China steps up alert for SARS outbreak

BEIJING—China on Sunday stepped up its nationwide alert for a possible outbreak of the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), a day after a man in southern Guangdong province was diagnosed as a suspected case.

The patient, a 32-year-old freelance journalist from a southern China television station, came down with SARS-like fever symptoms on Dec. 16 and was hospitalized for pneumonia four days later.

He was linked to a suspected SARS case on Saturday by China's health ministry, the first such case since health officials declared China SARS free in June following the latest outbreak of the epidemic disease.

"The diagnosis that the patient is a suspected SARS case still stands," Roy Wadia, spokesperson for the World Health Organization (WHO) office in Beijing, told AFP.

"So far the tests have been mixed, including those so far those have been some positive results and some negative results. They have to do a lot more testing."

A WHO expert was expected to arrive in Beijing on Monday and would quickly go on to the Guangzhou No. Eight Hospital in the capital of Guangdong province to help diagnose the patient, Wadia said.

The Guangzhou hospital had isolated the patient and some 32 medical workers who have been exhibiting at the end of the season to begin scrambling to set up SARS surveillance mechanisms.

"This is the flu season and there is a lot of concentration at this time," Dr. Julie Hall, the WHO's resident disease expert in Beijing, told AFP.

"The health system here, especially in the high risk areas of Guangdong and Beijing has been on finding if a high level of awareness so the detection of this case shows that the system is working."

Hall said a renewed outbreak of SARS was not unexpected, but urged China to further research into why people around clusters of the disease and set up food hygiene condition inspections aimed at wild animal markets.

"The patient does not appear to be infectious, and he is recovering rather quickly," China's SARS disease expert Zhong Nanshan told the China Youth Daily.

"It is not enough that cities such as Beijing and Guangzhou, as China is not trained for people in the city to panic."

In Guangdong, orders were issued to disinfect the living quarters of the sick men and track down people he had come in contact with.

Monitoring stations for fever set up at "sacred points in and out of Guangdong were reinforcing efforts to stop livestock travelers from moving around the country, especially with a travel peak expected for the annual Lunar New Year holiday next month.

Airports and railway stations around China, including Beijing, were setting up special websites for passengers from Guangdong in a further effort to monitor travelers' temperatures and contain another possible outbreak. AFP

Singapore PM to announce soon when he'll step down

SINGAPORE—Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said in remarks published Sunday that he would decide after the first quarter of next year when to step down and clear the way for a leadership change.

"Transition is on track and I would say maybe after the first quarter of next year, I would be able to firm up on the date of my retirement as premier," broadcaster Channel NewsAsia quoted Goh as saying on its website.

As the economy, I am sure, I do not have any objections."

Declaring that the economy was on the mend, Goh said he would be comfortable handing over leadership if gross domestic product grew by 3 to 4 percent in 2006.

"When the economy does well, growth can achieve 6 percent, for example, when everything is in order, that's the right time to hand over the baton to the younger team," he said.

Singapore's official growth forecast for next year is between 3 and 5 percent in the city-state emerged from the havoc wrought by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), the ill-fated epidemic that hit the world economy.

Several economists see the upper end of the target can be achieved.

Goh, who took over from the country's founding father Lee Kuan Yew in 1990, has already named Lee's son, Brigadier Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, as his successor.

A public relations blitz aimed at softening Lee Hsien Loong's authoritarian image and the impending economy have fueled debate over when the leadership change will take place. AFP

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METRO MANILA
December 20 (Tue)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Cebu Ave. cor. Quezon Avenue Quezon Center
10:00 AM to 6:00 PM
Ortigas-Robinsons Galleria
10:30 AM to 4:30 PM
New Divisoria Market
12:00 NN to 5:00 PM
Divisoria Center
December 24 (Wed)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Farmers Plaza
December 26 (Fri)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
LCSA-Cubao Aurora
El Cano
Head Office
Roosevelt Lopez Blvd.-Balut
North Bay Boulevard
Quiapo
Reclamation-Baclaran
Sta. Monica-Novaliches
Sto. Cristo
Sto. Cristo-San Nicolas
Subic-Rizal-Mindoro
12:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Ortigas-San Miguel Ave.
December 27 (Tue)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
New Divisoria Market
10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Ortigas-Robinsons Galleria
January 2 (Fri)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
LCSA-Cubao Aurora
Head Office
Quiapo
Tabaco Centennial I
12:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Ortigas-San Miguel Ave.
January 3 (Sat)
9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Divisoria Center
Mindvisor Highway-Malinta
LUZON
December 20 (Tue)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Baguio-Bonifacio
Batac, Batangas
Calamba-Parian
Carmona, Pangasinan
Ilagan
La Union-Main
Laoag-Jose Abaloz
Lucena-Main
San Pablo-Regidor
Santiago City Road
Tanuan, Batangas
Tarlac-Paniqueran
Urdaneta-Pangasinan
December 24 (Wed)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Kalibo
Masaya, Batangas
Roxas, Batangas
December 26 (Fri)
9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Legaspi-Rizal
Tabaco
December 27 (Tue)
9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Agoo, La Union
Baguio-Cabrini
Baguio-Magsaysay
Baguio-Session
Balanga, Bataan
Bataan, Batangas
Benguet-La Trinidad
Bicol-Naga Road
Calapan
Camiling
Candon
Casiguran
Dagupan-Fernandez
Dagupan-Perez
Iba, Zambales
La Union-MEL Gaudiano
Legaspi-Gen. Segundo
Legaspi-Rizal
Lipa-Avala
Lucena-Real V
Marilao-Bulacan
Occidental Mindoro
Olongapo
Santiago-Main
Solano
Tuguegarao-Luna
Vigan
December 28 (Sat)
9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Tanauan
December 31 (Wed)
9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Dagupan-Main
San Carlos-Pangasinan
San Pablo-Maharlika
January 2 (Fri)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Binmaley-Calasiao
Binondo-Ongpin
Bonifacio-Rizal
Cabanatuan-Gabaldon
Cabanatuan-Melencio
Cabanatuan-Rizal
Cabanatuan-Sumacab
Calamba-Crossing
Calamba-Real
Calamba-Rizal
Carmona
Cavite
Dau
Iriga
Iriga-Zerrudo
Lemery
Lipa-Marawoy
Lucena-Quezon
Magallanes
Makati-Buendia
Makati-Chino Roces
Makati-Gil Puyat
Makati-Kalayaan
Makati-Pasong Tamo
Makati-Rockwell
Makati-Salcedo
Makati-Urdaneta
Malolos-Bulacan
Mandaluyong-Shaw
Manila-Ermita
Manila-Intramuros
Manila-Pedro Gil
Manila-Quiapo
Manila-Recto
Manila-Roxas Blvd.
Manila-Taft
Marikina-Shoe Ave.
Meycauayan-Malhacan
Muntinlupa-Alabang
Muntinlupa-Filinvest
Muntinlupa-Poblacion
Naga-Central
Naga-Diversion
Naga-Penafrancia
Naga-Peñafrancia
Naga-Roxas
Naga-Zerrudo
Novaliches-Quirino
Pasay-Libertad
Pasay-Taft
Pasig-Caruncho
Pasig-Ortigas
Pasig-Rosario
Pateros
Quezon City-Aurora Blvd.
Quezon City-Commonwealth
Quezon City-Cubao
Quezon City-Kamuning
Quezon City-Katipunan
Quezon City-Kaunlaran
Quezon City-Libis
Quezon City-Maginhawa
Quezon City-Main
Quezon City-Mindanao Ave.
Quezon City-Project 4
Quezon City-Quirino Ave.
Quezon City-Roosevelt
Quezon City-Tandang Sora
Quezon City-Timog
Quezon City-Tomas Morato
Quezon City-Visayas Ave.
Quezon City-West Triangle
Rosario
Sampaloc-Legarda
Sampaloc-Quezon Blvd.
San Fernando
San Juan-Ortigas
San Juan-Pinaglabanan
San Pedro
Santa Cruz
Santa Rosa
Sucat-Dr. A. Santos
Sucat-Sucat Road
Taguig-Bicutan
Taguig-Lawton
Taguig-Market
Taguig-Metropolis
Taguig-Upper Bicutan
Tagum
Tanauan
Tarlac
Tayabas
Tuguegarao-Balzain
Valenzuela-Gen. T. de Leon
Valenzuela-Malinta
Valenzuela-Marulas
Valenzuela-Mc Arthur
Valenzuela-Paso de Blas
Valenzuela-Polo
Valenzuela-Tierra Vista
Valenzuela-Ugong
Valenzuela-Veinte Reales
Victoria
Vigan
Virac
Zambales-Iba
VISAYAS
December 26 (Fri)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Dumaguete
December 27 (Tue)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Antique
Cebu-Lincoln
Iloilo Delgado
Roxas
January 2 (Fri)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Bacolod-Cuartero
Bacolod-Capitol
Bacolod-Gatuslao
Bacolod-Gonzaga
Bacolod-Lacson
Bacolod-Libertad
Bacolod-North Drive
Bacolod-Singcang
Cebu-Tabunok
Cebu-Tabuon
Cebu-Uptown
Cebu-Uptown Center
Cebu-Lahug
Cebu-Tabuon
January 4 (Sat)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Roxas-Burgos
MINDANAO
December 26 (Fri)
9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Cagayan- de Oro-Main
December 27 (Tue)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Cagayan- de Oro-Main
Cagayan-Gaisano
Cagayan-Gen. Luna
Cagayan-Rizal
Cagayan-Velez
Davao-Bajada
Davao-Bangkal
Davao-Buhangin
Davao-Center
Davao-Dacudao
Davao-Ecoland
Davao-Matina
Davao-Monteverde
Davao-Panabo
Davao-R. Castillo
Davao-Rural
Davao-Roxas
Davao-San Pedro
Davao-Sta. Ana
Davao-Tagum
Davao-Toril
Digos
Gen. Santos-Makar
Gen. Santos-P. Acharon
Gen. Santos-Pioneer
Gen. Santos-Santiago Blvd.
January 3 (Tue)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Ipil
Iligan-Gen. Luna
Iligan-Quezon
Pagadian-Rizal
Pagadian-Sta. Lucia
Zamboanga-Binondo
Zamboanga-Gaisano
Zamboanga-Gen. Lim
Zamboanga-Veterans
Sampaloc-Gastelo
Sampaloc-Gen. Lim
Sampaloc-Jaldon
Sampaloc-Veterans
January 2 (Fri)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Cagayan- de Oro-Main
Davao-Agdao
Davao-Bajada
Davao-Bankerohan
Davao-Buhangin
Davao-Center
Davao-Dacudao
Davao-Ecoland
Davao-Matina
Davao-Monteverde
Davao-Panabo
Davao-R. Castillo
Davao-Rural
Davao-Roxas
Davao-San Pedro
Davao-Sta. Ana
Davao-Tagum
Davao-Toril
Digos
Gen. Santos-Makar
Gen. Santos-P. Acharon
Gen. Santos-Pioneer
Gen. Santos-Santiago Blvd.
January 3 (Tue)
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Ipil
Iligan-Gen. Luna
Iligan-Quezon
Pagadian-Rizal
Pagadian-Sta. Lucia
Zamboanga-Binondo
Zamboanga-Gaisano
Zamboanga-Gen. Lim
Zamboanga-Jaldon
Zamboanga-Veterans

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13 killed in coordinated rebel attacks in Iraq

AN IRAQI mother lies next to her injured son at a hospital in the city of Karbala, some 110 km south of Baghdad, following a string of attacks on coalition forces on Dec. 27.

REUTERS

Thailand vows to keep forces in Iraq

BANGKOK, Thailand — Thailand's prime minister vowed Tuesday to keep his nation's troops in Iraq despite calls from the opposition for a withdrawal following the deaths of two Thai soldiers — the first fatalities among its noncombatant force in Iraq.

The two dead troops were on guard duty when a car rammed the wall of their camp in the southern Iraqi city of Karbala and exploded on Saturday, Thai officials said.

"We will continue to work for humanitarian ends ... The next batch of troops are preparing and making themselves ready. They are ready to go to Iraq as scheduled. Nobody has changed their mind, their morale is still good," Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra told reporters.

He said the two slain soldiers were "brave," standing guard even after military officials received intelligence reports suggesting they would be an attack. Thaksin did not elaborate.

"We honor them and will take good care of their families. They will be compensated," he added.

The deaths of the two soldiers received front-page attention in Thailand's media on Sunday. The Nation daily reported that Thai military commanders held an emergency meeting late Saturday after hearing the news.

Army spokesperson Col. Sunkamon Suwiggavesmarth said he believed the two dead were the first Thai soldiers to be killed on an overseas battlefield since the Vietnam War.

The chair of the lower foreign relations committee, Kraisak Choonhavan, a strong opponent of Thailand's decision to deploy troops to Iraq, said Thai soldiers were not safe there and should not have to "save their lives for nothing."

"I have called several other senators who have supported my idea of making another request to the government to withdraw from Iraq," he told reporters. "It is the time for the government to intervene its position on the remaining troops in Iraq."

Following the Thai decision to deploy troops to Iraq, US President George W. Bush in October assured Thailand took Asia ally status, opening the door to military benefits and. A withdrawal of Thai troops from Iraq could upset Washington and jeopardize that deal.

Thaksin said Bush telephoned him early Monday to condole condolences to the families of the killed soldiers and to praise the bravery of Thai troops in Iraq.

Thailand's chief of military intelligence, Lt. Gen. Pisarn Wedjaratana, said that the Army was not discussing the possibility of withdrawing its troops and that Thai soldiers would "continue to carry out their humanitarian work ... as assigned by the government."

"At the moment we are talking about intensifying more personal security measures to prevent or deter such kinds of car bomb attacks. We have orders to open more barriers on the road that leads to the camp," he said.

"But no bombs were discovered by security control, he said, without elaborating. AP

KARBALA, Iraq — In the biggest rebel attack since the Dec. 13 capture of Saddam Hussein, suicide bombers and gunmen with mortars and grenade launchers blasted coalition military bases and the governor's office in the southern city of Karbala, the coalition soldiers, an Iraqi police officers said a civilian died.

At least 172 people, many of them civilians caught in the chaos, were injured Saturday in the nearly simultaneous assaults that appeared designed to test the resolve of Washington's allies in the country governing Iraq. A Polish-led force is responsible for security around the holy Shiite city of Karbala, and four Bulgarian troops and two Thai soldiers died.

Insurgents might also have targeted Karbala, south of Baghdad, on the assumption that military targets there would be more vulnerable to attack. The most intense rebel activity is in Sunni areas west and north of Baghdad, where coalition-led American troops have been experiencing flooding of suicide bombers and other assailants.

One of four suicide bombers in Karbala gained entry to a Bulgarian camp, moving through road blocks in a car and destroying a building where the headquarters of the unit was housed, Bulgarian Deputy Defense Minister Nikolay Chobanov said in Sofia.

Four Bulgarian soldiers were killed and 27 others were wounded, Chobanov said.

"We expected these attacks because Karbala was exceptionally peaceful in the recent time," said Plamen Galev, the Bulgarian Army chief of staff. "We improved security measures every day, but terrorists always find holes in the time."

Bulgaria, a staunch supporter of the US military campaign in Iraq, has a 486-member light infantry battalion stationed under Polish command.

Asian bomb also killed two Thai soldiers on guard duty when the vehicle rammed into their camp's wall, a Thai spokesperson said in Bangkok. Thailand sent 443 soldiers to Iraq in September to provide medical and relief help to build war-shattered infrastructure.

The Thais had been confident enough about their security that they planned to send 300. The civilians to visit their troops. A Thai newspaper, The Nation, said the readies would travel with senior military officials in February in the wake of the attacks. It wasn't clear whether the plan would go ahead.

Six Iraqi police officers and an Iraqi woman living next to one of the military bases were killed in Karbala, said Ali al-Nasseri, deputy director of the General Hospital. Some 170 Iraqi civilians and police officers also were wounded, many of them fatally, he said.

In Baghdad, US Army Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said a total of 37 coalition soldiers, including five Americans, were injured.

"It was a coordinated, massive attack planned on a big scale and intended to do much harm," British Maj. Gen. Andrzej Tyszkiewicz said from his headquarters at Camp Babylon, east of Karbala. Poland commands a multinational force of 9,200 soldiers, including 2,400 Poles.

After the attacks, US troops sealed off the streets where gunmen attacked the governor's office. There destroyed cars lay in the street. At the hospital, crying people crowded the corridors, searching for missing family members.

"I was in the front office when I heard a loud explosion," Wahab Abdul Hussein, a 49-year-old Arab official at the governor's office, said from the hospital bed. "Shattered glass hit me in the face and then I passed out. I woke up in the hospital."

As Abdul Hussein spoke, blood was drawn from him. His family was nearby.

Mohammed Jassim, 50, said he was about to enter the governor's office to try to settle a land dispute when a car bomb exploded, injuring his hand.

"I was knocked out on the floor by the explosion," he said. He blamed supporters of Saddam, whose arrest was a major victory for the troops, although American commanders believe the insurgency is a loose-knit organization without a rigid command and control structure. AP

WorldBriefs

N. Korea open to talks again

SEOUL—North Korea has confirmed that it is willing to hold talks with the United States and five other nations next year in order to resolve its nuclear weapons programs. A top Chinese diplomat met with North Korean officials on Dec. 19-20, said the North's official news agency KCNA, which reported that both sides agreed to end up a common vision of the six-nation negotiations. "Both sides ... expressed their willingness to make appropriate preparations to hold talks as an element of a mutually acceptable package solution to the nuclear issue," KCNA quoted a North Korean spokesperson as saying. The United States, China, Japan, Russia and the two Koreas held a first round of talks on the DPRK's nuclear development in Beijing in August. The meetings achieved little progress or an agreement on a date for next talks. AP

Protest over Taiwan labor laws

TAIPEI—More than 200 foreign laborers, some complaining of physical abuse by employers, protested in Taipei on Sunday to demand better working conditions. The workers, mostly from countries like the Philippines and Thailand, carried banners that read: "End Hypocritical Import Workers Control Policies. It's Time to Have Human Rights." Many of the protesters work in private homes caring for the elderly and sick and said they have little time off to do other activities. Lobi Wang Wen-shiou, a Taiwanese protest organizer, said a local police station confiscated physical abuse testimonies from some foreign employees. AP

Runner-up crowned Miss Taiwan

TAIPEI—Kao Ching-ke was crowned Miss Taiwan on Sunday two days after the title holder resigned allegations she had worked as a prostitute. Kao, the first runner-up at the Miss Taiwan beauty contest in July, replaced winner Lin Ke-yao, who went into hiding reportedly because her parents didn't feel ashamed her over a huge debt. A cooking fan, 21, posed for pictures on a public bulletin board. She would serve Taiwan "with a pure heart and a kind attitude," Miss Taiwan. AP

3 China rulers axed for graft

BEIJING—Two deputies to China's top parliamentary body have been dismissed for bribery, with one found to have eight of constituents and have been convicted during his election to the legislature, state-owned reported Sunday. The dismissal from the National People's Congress (NPC) of Chen Mingtong of central Hebei province prompted immediate calls from a Hong Kong-based rights group for the resignation of those who accepted the bribes. According to Xinhua news agency, Chen was "unsatisfactory" in Taiwan province were formally dismissed by a Saturday meeting of the NPC standing committee in Saturday. Two were dismissed for accepting bribes in the former mayor of Beijing City. AFP

13 Aceh guerrillas killed

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia—The Indonesian military said its troops in Aceh province, announced the deaths of 13 rebel guerrilla fighters on Sunday. The military says about 1,200 Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels have been killed since the beginning of the operation on May. Authoritarian leaders, troops and dead these rebels of insurgency. However, on Saturday, another three were killed in Lhoksukon. Meanwhile, two rebels on Saturday, while members of the elite Kopassus troop shot dead another two suspected rebels in the hill region in Bener Meriah district, about 360km from Aceh. Another suspected GAM member killed in a shoot-out in Nagan, South Aceh district, around noon the same day, he said. Reuters

Credit card charged to Arafat

RAMALLAH—Police arrested two alleged robbers at a checkpoint in the West Bank and confiscated a fake credit card, including one in the name of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, the Israeli Army said Sunday. Israeli Military Intelligence officials were addressed to the Ministry, Arafat's headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah, where he has been confined for the last two years, the Israeli Army said. The two, the Army said, were from Arafat's hometown of Gaza. AFP

Hard choice for Serbs in polls

BELGRADE, Serbia-Montenegro—Serbs had the chance Sunday of voting Slobodan Milosevic's allies out of power, with a risk of receiving an international backlash, or backing pro-democracy parties that ousted the authoritarian leader but failed to fulfill voters' expectations.

About 6.5 million people were eligible to cast ballots in elections for the Serbian parliament. The campaign was marked by the assassination of the republic and the rebirth of the Milosevic, still languishing in his trial in The Hague, Netherlands, on charges of war crimes in the 1990s.

Polls opened at 0600 GMT and were to close 12 hours later. Preliminary results were expected before midnight.

In a sign that the nationalists have lost their massive support, a key ultranationalist ally, the Serbian nationalist Serbian Radical Party, was predicted to win more votes among the 18 parties on candidates and more than 4,000 candidates on the ballot.

Moreover, the list of candidates included Milosevic, Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj, and members of the ultranationalist clergy by the ICTY, although in The Hague, Serbia, which is trying Milosevic and others declared responsible for the massacre of the Balkan wars.

The main issue is whether the Radical party—which advocates expanding Serbia's borders at the expense of its neighbors, and considers Saddam Hussein a brother-in-arms—will win a majority of votes, allowing it to form a government.

"We cannot say who will have the majority, due to an Iraqi-and other elections," said Marko Blagojevic, an independent observer. "This will be a very competitive."

According to pre-election opinion polls, the Radicals were expected to win about one quarter of the votes cast—the most of any single grouping—while three main pro-democracy parties could garner just over 50 percent. The rest would go to the minor players, including Milosevic's Socialists who were expected to win about 6 percent.

Although the three democratic groups—which all want to bring the former president to trial—have the same position in 2000 could form the government together and sideline the Radicals, their common bickering likely will avoid such an outcome.

A key point in the bloc is the Democratic Party of Serbia led by Vojislav Kostunica, who succeeded Milosevic as president of Yugoslavia, Serbia-Montenegro's parliamentary body. Kostunica refuses to form an alliance with the pro-ruling Democratic Party, accusing it of corruption. The third pro-democracy ally is G 17 Plus, who has major disagreements with the ruling Democratic bloc is willing to cooperate with Kostunica.

On the other hand, if the Radicals win fewer than the Socialist and other minor parties they could end up joining the second round—a scenario that would likely plunge Serbia deeper into crisis and economic doom and destabilize the whole region. AP

600 lawyers offer services to Saddam

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - More than 600 lawyers have signed up as defense counsel for Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi bar Arabic's Bar Association said, told the Arabic News newspaper on Sunday.

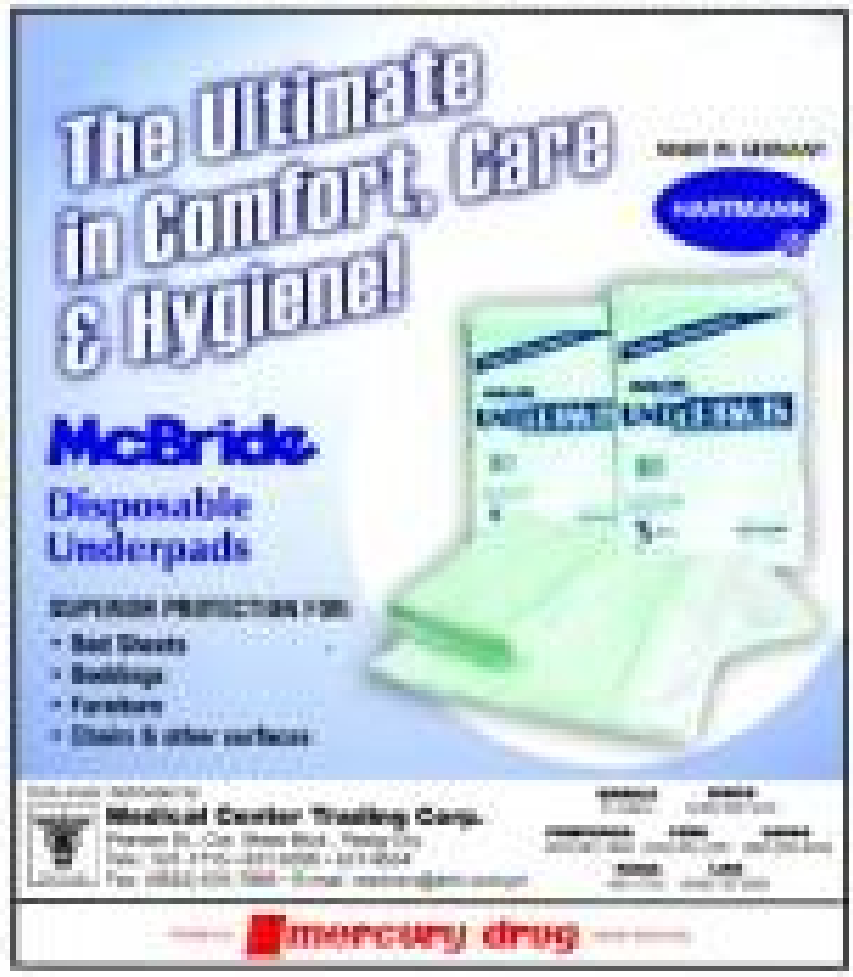
Hussein Khalil said the volunteers had signed up at the association's offices in the past week and that he was confident the number would double to 1,200 by the end of January.

"The decision is not from a higher committee for the defense of Saddam, the rules is still the legal right in front all over the world," Khalil said.

The general secretary of the Arab Lawyers' Union was unavailable due to snow Sunday in Cairo to discuss plans for setting up the defense team, he added.

But he said the Arab Bar Association's executive body known as UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Arab League chief Amr Moussa urging them to ensure that Saddam would be handed to a neutral country or the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The lawyers have argued that Saddam should not be put on trial because "a head of state is immune from prosecution" and that in any case he should be prosecuted in a court set up by the United States. AP



INQUIRER

OPINION

For shame

THE RESIDENTS of San Francisco in Southern Leyte have had to endure two calamities in the last two weeks: the rain-triggered mudslides that claimed almost 200 lives throughout the province last before Christmas, and the man-made disaster that afflicts us the whole year round, and from which there seems to be no respite, called politicking.

EDITORIAL

PATRIAN politics reared its monstrous head where local politicians quarrelled over the distribution of relief goods. They fought for credit, with one politician even stamping Christmas greetings on the aid packages. "Retribution," as Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman defined the problem, is familiar and commonplace, but hardly life-threatening.

The bayanihan has learned, however, that Rep. Antonio Sabalo had caused a delay in the distribution, because he wanted the relief goods to be counted through his political ally the town mayor. In providing assistance to victims who have lost everything, even an hour's delay is unconscionable. A head-up-her-credit-grabbing purposes should be punished with outright disqualification from public office.

But Sabalo has denied the report, accusing his arch-rival, Gov. Rosette Lotilla, of spreading the rumors because of the coming elections. It was Lotilla, he said, who maneuvered to have the relief goods distributed through her allies, led by the vice mayor. "If somebody was politicking, it was them," Sabalo said.

But if packs of relief goods at a San Francisco parish office are any evidence, the congressman himself had already politicized the calamity assistance programs. The packs bore stickers that read, "Maligayang Pasko [Merry Christmas] through the effort of Representative Antonio Sabalo."

Sabalo maintained that the items had been prepared long before the tragedy struck. "Of course, it is Christmas so we should place . . . Merry Christmas," he said. "That explained why there was a sticker on the package. Why should we remove the stickers so we would not be accused of politicking?"

It did not seem to occur to him that the answer to his own question is, or should have been, no. *Bellaudera* is a forgotten virtue among politicians, but even the most politically inept know that, in times of calamity, politicians must be seen to observe the virtue scrupulously. Nobody wants to be seen as an opportunist making political capital out of other people's misfortunes.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has reached into the mud, both literally and figuratively. After visiting the stricken areas on still-inclement weather, she elected the politicians bickering over their role in the distribution of the relief goods. "Let us not turn human tragedies into political opportunities," Ms Macapagal said in a press statement. "Let us focus on sincere and selfless efforts to alleviate the plight of the victims."

At head of state, Ms Macapagal was surely right to put the politicians in their place. And yet who can forget that she is also the head of an administration that is also adept at turning almost anything into political opportunity?

The President has shown up in an AIDS concert beside American pop star Mandy Moore; she has made herself available for an unexpected courtesy call by a member of the popular Pit group from Taiwan in visit arranged, not coincidentally, by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo). She has visited numerous victims of terrorism or natural calamities, personally distributing cash envelopes to the bereaved. She continues to tolerate the practice (begun in Bicutan' time and continued under Estrada's) of naming public works projects and government programs after presidential family.

Her apologists may say Ms Macapagal is no worse than others, that her ceremonial duties must not be confused with her responsibilities as a re-electionist politician, that the law actually requires government projects to identify, on site, those public officials responsible for their funding. But the sad truth is, there is a direct line between the President's own political practice and those relief goods stamped, indecently, with Christmas-inspired greetings.

Press releases won't prevent mayhem

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

I AM not a former teller, but I can predict what's going to happen day after tomorrow and when the news will be the day after. The tropical cyclone we have now will be full of injured people, the number of which doctors and nurses will be concerned. There will be a new law. There must be one or two explosions, caused not by terrorists but by careless revelers (it is firecrackers known) or by a cricket or petty-crackers division. There will be cases of fractured appendages of fingers and toes injured beyond saving by firecracker blasts. The deaths will be caused by the fires, by stray bullets, and by stabbings due to fights among intoxicated New Year's Eve celebrations. After that's over, the newspapers will be full of stories of murder and the cutoff of gunpowder so though they were in a war zone.

What's going to happen is an predictable as the sunrises as it has to occur the following day as it does now. In the meantime, in addition to the usual, tasteless and photo-missing, to be filled in later. Readers can expect when photographs will fill in the newspapers the next day: those of children and foolish adults getting maiming or pain to death with their fingers, hands or beyond amputated limbs, and firemen and victims trying to put out fires.

I can also predict the press releases that will be issued by the Philippine National Police and by the Department of Health. Don't die your young and reckless lives. Don't be stupid. Don't sacrifice your lives. And as sure as the sun will rise the next day, law will heed the warnings and there will be many newly maimed individuals in need by New Year.

All this and then will be caused by our desire summarily by most Americans put the end, as to the Chinese called the "firecracker." The fine firecrackers were small, squeeze-sized ones that were comparatively safe. But like the arms race among world powers, they became bigger and more powerful. It is a point by they can maim one fingers and even kill.

Reasoning that nonsensers were bigger fire-crackers with louder blasts, greedy Filipino firecracker manufacturers made more lethal devices in order to sell more. They have colorful names like Super Lolo, Pla-Pla, Bawang, Baby Dynamite, Judas, etc., but they have one element common, they can maim, blind, sacrifice fingers and toes, even kill. Some of them have the power of small hand grenade.

They are the illegal fire manufacturers **make thousands of times quick.** They are also sold in the open. They litter the Balintawak highway in Caloocan. Like all the illegal products from the underworld source living it. The police are there, but they don't do anything. Sometimes they will seize a cache for press release purposes, some of which will be sold to customers on the sly by the policemen themselves.

Occasionally, city and municipal governments and their police forces are supposed to enforce the laws on the manufacture of pyrotechnics. They will seize in high lanterns they they do. But if they really do, how do these hundreds of thousands of illegal firecrackers get to the market?

The only explanation is that local governments and police officials are negligent or worse, are being bribed.

Not other years the same regrets do happen. Children are maimed, blinded, killed. Parents of children and knowing but foolish adults some of them are disabled for life. All because they wanted to greet the New Year with plenty of explosions and noise. What is supposed to be a happy celebration ends out to be a tragic occasion for some families.

But only the manufacturers should bear the guilt but also the corrupt officials who did not do their duty to enforce the law against illegal pyrotechnics. It happens so often and so regularly that the people come to be ignored. Enough is enough. We have to do away with the illegal firecrackers

China conquers US through its goods

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassayre

SEATTLE—We called up Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. in Manila to greet him happy holidays. Unwarranted? I mailed in the diary he asked me to. "Is it necessary to write?" Unfortunately, for the hundreds of visiting Pinoys in search of a other Christmas, the weather in downtown Seattle has come close to freezing point, but it will get warmer in succeeding days. Some will cause icy streets. Christmas Eve, when people are in the bargain-hunting throes, sleeps 80 hrs-footfloor of Seattle and at an elevation of about 4,500 ft. where snow fell hard all through Sunday. Shortening everything to inches. It was only pins and pieces.

There was no snow in downtown Seattle, only rain. But judging from my conversation with the Speakers political activities are more intense by back home up to the last Saturday for 02. Ing of synthesis of candidacy issues. Queried on how things were politically. 200 admitted that registration is still very active in preparing the elections. A vice presidential candidate for Cebu, as well as between some people in Pasig. Ejercito? Governor's camp and those of candidates Raul Roco and even Fernando Poe Jr. are a possible scenario. Things should clear up within the next three months, said JDV.

* * *

He said Lakas is busy firming up its candidates for all the elective posts, but the trouble is that in the provinces, the party's choice may not be good for the party posts. Those who will not be picked will probably end up in the other camps, but there have it a reality sketched, you win some, lose some. He said Lakas hopes it has ultimately all the politicians will under the party banner, but there are some that can afford to lose and to have, instead of the caution exposure to unfriendly multi-party system that politically-weakening for one winner of the party. Identical race is inevitable. Solo or nonsense.

Dr. Ebenezer opened that 2000 is a turning point as well in her anti-narcotics campaign, with the checkpoints to and from various airports and the international hubs being lowers the crime rate, in the country. Drug lords are now in the run. Now that the anti-drug campaign has yielded some

(SEE PAGE A-13)

ORDERS a trip to my hometown of General Santos City for the traditional family gathering on Christmas Eve, midnight mass of the shooter was one were unavoidably wonderful.

The vets and Andi Arnas trip from Davao City to the country's "rural capital" was severe for leaving so one money and recently struck the expensive portion of politicians, everyday standing to the populace good tidings for the season, they are undoubtedly hung from shutter every corner hanging over. Even the Christmas trees in the public plaza campaign device to the glossy calendar, particularly to pocket-sized ones, which supporters distribute to the restaurant and counter to this for the holidays.

But mostly, those obvious early campaigning activities are not appreciated by the electorate, whose wishes are not yet known. Many politicians who would rather wish, I suppose, that the posters on calendars be instead converted to cash and distributed to them.

Indeed, for many who celebrated Christmas Eve, politics is the last thing on their minds. And rightly so. Politics is not the only public issue suddenly visible, waiting to rush and overrun, after emerging from six to ten. Yet the news headlines among those for the three who cannot resist the temptation of talking politics, even on the occasion of the season's greetings. One minute in Southern Luzon and other parts of Visayas and Mindanao. Donated bags of goodies were plastered with the names of these politicians.

Politics is unique, we can only say. *Times ma? Ito ba ang Pilipinas ng?*

* * *

In retrospect, the year 2001 is but a continuing saga of unfulfilled promises for Mindanao. Its

(SEE PAGE A-13)

Retrospect

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

war, the long-sought and potential resolution to the rebellion in the island is still very elusive. The veiled peace talks between the government and the MILF seem to have failed to take off. Endless charges and counter-charges apparently have been hurled by both parties. Despite repeated efforts, the government keeps on blaming the MILF of having links, directly or otherwise, with terrorists and bandit groups, like the Pentagon following group and Abusayaf. On the other hand, the MILF is accusing the government of being a "terrorist" organization" in the world community.

On the other hand, the war Mindanao became the so-called test to the "international war on terrorism" proposed by Uncle Sam. It has become a grave adventure, inexcusable. Like the occupation forces were stationed in Iraq, US forces have now left the island since the start of the "war games" in Basilan. The "testing" US forces are now over-

(SEE PAGE A-13)

Wishes for 2004

LAST week, I wrote about the suggestions of some readers on how to make the business a better newspaper. The "wish list" was a compilation of the responses to an informal survey I conducted a few weeks back among the readers who were active in e-mailing me.

Several readers felt that were discriminated against when they were not included in the poll. So they e-mailed to me their own version of

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Fabella

completing the picture. "I would like my suggestions, if ..." By and large, their thoughts on what they think a good newspaper should be mirrored those earlier mentioned by the readers I featured in last week's column.

This time, I would like to turn the tables, sort of. It will be my own version of a "Year Ender" letter or what I wish from my own readers.

If I may be allowed to brainstorm a bit, in my late colonoscopy 2002 I requested the readers to be more careful in their choice of words when they complain about errors and glitches. Grammar, mine all, can be repressed without worrying to food or offensive language.

Apparently, the point was granted my wife. Except for a few, most of the letters I received that year seemed to have been written by readers who paused and flung colon a course on "Good Manners and Right Conduct."

As the coming year, I wish the readers who read these letters by postal service, facsimile or e-mail will see to it that I receive them within hours or days of their mailing or transmission.

On several occasions, I got some calls and letters from readers berating me for not acknowledging receipt or answering their written communications to me.

There is also hesitancy on the part of readers to use the letters to answer one's honest to my column.

Slow mail

Blaming it on the perceived slight on his pride, a reader threatened to request me as the president of the newspaper and ask for my relief due to gross neglect of my duties as reader's advocate. Another reader said my column was "all for show and a waste and/or to get the impression to the readers that the business listens to their complaints."

I do not claim to have a main-line system for receiving the letters and e-mail sent to the readers, but I think I have provided more than adequate means for the communication. I even got to my desk promptly and that my computer is properly maintained to accept e-mail from all corners of the world.

In spite of the hindrances to the receipts by the postal authorities, letters sent by mail no longer reach their destination only after a week or more after they were sent. In a case of urgency, I have sent letters to reach me. If the letter comes from the Pasig to Makati.

If the complaint is time, the readers should understand that the quality of the information is affected by the conditions of the text machine that is used. If the copy that comes out of the newspaper's fax machine is garbled or unreadable, my successor tells the number of the non-working machine that is usually indicated in the copy to request that the fax machine be repaired. I have no such number—the fax machine is not working again in the same format.

Time

I would like to request the readers who send their letters to me to either put their letterhead number or call my office to confirm receipt of their letter. A typed copy of the letter (usually the copy I'll show to such a request to the author appearing in the letter, unless the reader wants a different one for me to respond to his or her complaint.

As for e-mail, I think these readers should know by now that the Inbox size system is not gas-free. It is conceivable (and I hope!) that the Inbox will be expanded in the future with other technological glitches that distort or prevent the clear communication of electronic communication.

Additionally, the Internet facilities of the business have built-in mechanism that enable them to automatically reject e-mail that exceed a certain number of sizes that are the equivalent of the newspaper's IT staff.

Sometimes any reader prompt to many even business down the lack of response to his e-mail, it may be a good idea for him to consider of something beyond his or my control might have prevented him e-mail from getting to me or my respective boss or acting him.

It is also my wish for 2004 that people who figure in the news will stop thinking that part of my job is to make arrangements for them to be able to talk personally to the reporters or members of the editorial staff who, in their opinion, did not give them the right to the opening of the paper. The reason with you reading letters complaints or PR statements, these news personalities have no having some on one with whom to deal that is responsible for preparing human a bad light before the public. The letting of self-importance of these people is completely unjustified.

Appointments

There is also apologies out of a left-leaning organizations who asked me, by e-mail, to set up meeting with the editors or reporters after time and date so he could personally express to them their opinions and reminisce the efforts of another group in the news of the day.

After forwarding his request to the secretary of the editor in chief, I wrote him to say what I had done and gave him the number to call to follow up his request. He wrote back to me that I should make the arrangements for him "to guess that the business is really lax and objective in reporting the newsmakers and the newsworthy events of the day."

I assured that I am not the appointments secretary of the editorial staff so all requests for meetings with the editors should be routed directly to them or their secretaries. He was adamant. He demanded that I do the arrangements for his organization, otherwise he would inform his names to higher management.

As I was on point in the first ongoing week him, I did not reply to his cursing anymore. His subsequent e-mail to me is currently encouraged me to press the "delete" key without hesitation.

The advice I gave that overzealous apologetic to applies to some gas-sensitive or readers who may be similarly situated.

Happy New Year!

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: *The Reader Advocate, the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Tejeron and Mauricio Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 96, or readers advocate@inquirer.com.ph.*

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Rizal, excommunicated Mason and national hero

COMMENTARY

Deoni Fargo Bucoba

REPACKAGED: you have some Christmas cards to write. I will grant them, in honor of Jose Rizal. But remember, this he died a Catholic in spite of the enigmatic metaphor from his carbon-dated, 1940 commemorative diatribe which we must now all have in the shrub queen beans, his chest's a different answer). Rizal lived as an excommunicated Mason—a status reaffirmed when the Masonic Temple Lautaro (Logia) in 1911). Rizal died, said the Catholic Encyclopedia confirmed all Masons as hell-spats, officially, in 1890. But one Rizal was a devastating writer, a doctor (ophthalmology master's degree) and also the first of his genus, a free-thinker who was not afraid to express a point of view, against the tide—exactly one century before Jesus. Remember, the medieval Rizal the hero, who would believe that freedom of religion means speaking to us?

Religion is found in the 1987 Bill of Rights under Section 5: "No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights."

This is the famous "separation of Church and State" which functions government separate to the exercise of religion. Any law public institution to remain this principle. It needs to be honor respected.

First, the prohibitions of oppressive apply to the government could not to churches or religious leaders. Public officials are forbidden from either promoting "us" inhibiting religion. Public criteria are not, randomly, means, televangelists and the common no use forever free to nuisance and enjoy their religious practices and organized groups of their choice. Religious tolerance is central to Christians, Muslims, agnostics, atheists, Protestants and Mormons. The government may not favor or discriminate among religious sects or spread

(SEE PAGE A-13)

ing the public's money. Thus Art. IV Sec. 29 provides: "No public money or property shall be appropriated, applied, paid, or employed, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, sectarian institution, or system of religion, or of any priest, preacher, minister, or other religious teacher, or dignitary as such, except when such use, benefit, assistance, or dignitary is assigned to the armed forces, or to any penal institution, or government orphanage or leprosarium."

The Constitution provides that private theology is separate from public morals. Here a common mistake can occur: considering religious beliefs. But rules may sometimes implies that public officials must give up some of their own religious convictions when it comes to public service. Public servants who have a conscientious objection to that affect "religion" have to modify functions must divest certain properties and give up some rights when they join the Cabinet, or to no must public officials surrender their absolute religious freedom for the sake of democratic knowledge and service. In fact...If...may have to pay taxes as a political party if Brother Eddie says.

No one pays taxes in good reason why does not exercise to defend the religious freedom of others, even if they are not members of the same faith. For example, a Catholic should not be in government if he cannot uphold the right of Muslims to hold that Jesus Christ was the son of a woman. Khadafy's opinion is bought, not the law of Allah, does not have to be accepted by you, but the Quran Mohammed. In providing you must defend the rights of others to say that argument from us of your day are merely based on the mental negligence of parental diversity than nature, like Yahweh and Jesus and El Shaddai, created by human activities and devised quite easy by studying and observation. Conversely, you are free and to the public officials cannot defend the rights of the Opus Dei to insist on the exact opposite of these. And to understand why.

There is a widespread erroneous opinion that the Philippines is a Catholic nation. This is due largely to the strong historical influence of a 400-hour rule (illegal). But is clearly refuted by the 60 hidden thousand and unusual republicans that "respect an establishment of religion" but don't overwhelm the Spanish Catholic Mass. Indeed, the Philippines is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world. There is a large population will pay a trip to the daily Roman Catholic Mass—although its outward government offices like the Supreme Court and Malacañang, a minority of the majority close daily inside. Muslims are found in Mindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi and Basilan. Aglipayans (Iglesia Filipina Independiente) are found in the north and central Luzon. Members of the Iglesia ni Cristo are in the Ilocos region and Central Luzon. Seventh-Day Adventists are found in the Visayas and Mindanao. Jehovah's Witnesses are in every district and most municipalities. Members of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) are found in the Visayas and Mindanao. Buddhists are found in Cebu and Davao. Baptists are found in Cebu and Davao. Baptists are found in Cebu and Davao. Bapt

FPJ is the wild card in 2004

WHY are the Makati businessmen alarmed by the non-appearance of presidential aspirant Fernando Poe Jr. during their recent meeting? The other aspirants—Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Raul Roco and Panfilo Lacson—attended the meeting and presented their platforms or plans, but they hardly made waves.

The explanation is important, the Macapagal, Roco and Lacson groups know, cards in the presidential derby. They are competing for the presidency within the framework of constitutional wisdom. They all consider corruption the mother of the country's problems. They are all for transparency and good or honest governance. They are all for peace and order. Over and above all, they are all for unquestioning adherence to the country's "established political" —those imposed upon the Philippines by the multilateralists of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and by the first trade contracts made at the Uruguay Round of the World Trade Organization. Therefore, their platforms or plans for 2004 are not newsmakers.

If the presidential aspirants, FPJ is the wild card. Will he consider corruption the mother of all problems, or will he see the roots of poverty and injustice in free trade (now called globalization), which has been squeezing the Filipino masses by preventing the industrialization of the country since 1960? Will he limit himself to good or honest governance and, for the benefit of transnationals corporations and their Filipino subsidiaries, let the profit drivers market freely generate the market? Will he focus only on peace and order and make the government act merely as the security guard of profit-driven corporate giants, foreign and local? Over and above all, will he respect the democratic sanctity of the WB (IBF-WTO conditionalities which have kept our economy geo-subjected and the Filipino masses, who idolize him, impoverished, hungry and oppressed?

Sen. Nene Pimentel (nationalism) are warning for FPJ answers to these questions. The nationalists are also waiting. They do not want a repeat of what Erap did. The masses elected Erap as the presidency but when he became president, he sought to enacted Article XII of the Constitution to deliver the national economy and patrimony to foreigners. They want FPJ to be as ready to their interests from poverty and injustice.

Where FPJ spells out his platform, whether with his allies—the Makati businessmen and their foreign partners or the Filipino masses? He cannot please them both. He has to make a choice.

—ARMANDO DOCENO,
Unit 904 Cityland Square Condominium, 143 Tido Avenue, Cubao, Quezon City

Eid'l Fitr day was correct date

THIS is a reaction to the article of Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. last Nov 27, 2003 titled, "Gapal: She did it again. We say she declared for the Muslim holiday."

Misreading did not commit any mistake in declaring Nov. 26, 2003 as a national legal holiday for the Muslims in celebrating Eid'l Fitr.

Section 3 of Republic Act 9177 provides: "The implementation of this act shall be under the supervision of the Office on Muslim Affairs (OMA) which shall promulgate rules and regulation pursuant to the provisions of this Act, one."

On Nov 20, 2002, OMA held its initial Ulama Consultative Conference precisely in Sofitel in Tokyo and spontaneous implementing RA 9177. The Ulama, who attended the said meeting, passed Resolution No. 02-005 which provides: "Recommending to the President of the Republic of the Philippines to recognize every 2nd day of the ten days after the 29th day of Ramadan (Syawal) Calendar as the National Legal Holiday for the celebration of Eid'l Fitr." Pro-Tasripah Pasaa in the Philippines."

Sen. 24, 2003 was the 29th day of Ramadan, therefore, the second day after the 29th of Ramadan was Nov. 26, 2003. Retro, Misleading was right.

After all, the basis of Eid'l Fitr reunion of three days after the 30th day of the Holy Month. Aside from OMA, the declaration of celebrate does not necessarily mean that it is the same date as that of the prayer of Eid'l Fitr or as we call it, Qudrah.

—DIRAJAH G. GANDARA,
Darul Iqtisyuddy, Asmara St. Cagayan, Cagayan de Oro City

The blessings of electricity

WHY certain people fail to see beyond their noses on the issue of the power rate hike is beyond me.

Have they already forgotten the 11-centavos rate increase, admittedly an absolute prerequisite to the improvement that the distribution facility has promised to implement, aspect so-called "consumer advocates" and "pro-people" politicians want to make a issue that will be found from here to Bataan?

Where will these 12 centavos per kilowatt-hour go? According to Jesse Francisco of Meralco, they have lined up 42 capital projects in order to cater to the 70 percent increasing demand for power. The company will also reportedly replace some 20-year-old power transformers, and improve the efficiency of its sub-transmission network.

Any businessman worth his salt understands that adequate power is crucial to any enterprise, whether large or small, well established or a newcomer. The business sense is already plenty—not the economy's political situation. The specter of blackouts may well be the last nail that will seal our economic fate. How can the Philippines become a "strong republic" if its people are rendered immobile and helpless by unreliable power supply?

Indeed, as my mother used to tell me, you don't truly appreciate something until you lose it. That goes for the blessings of electricity as well.

—ALEXIS FRANCO,
Sumaila Street, Malate, Manila

LETTERS

Belmonte has done much for QC

THE COMMENTS of Soni Cruz in his Dec. 15 column were not only untrue but unfair and unkind to Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte.

Belmonte has always been available to everyone who wants to discuss anything with him. He diligently attends to hundreds of various every day, particularly on Mondays which is designated as People's Day.

Cruz charges our mayor on the fact that Belmonte always finds time to discuss issues and concerns involving the business community in Quezon City.

In fact, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently adopted Quezon City as "the most business friendly city" in the country today.

I have had the opportunity to work closely with the mayor on many projects which involved the business sector every city.

We are aware and proud of the numerous accomplishments of Belmonte in the last two and a half years.

One of his most remarkable achievements was forcing around the financial position of Quezon City. The city treasury had a cash deficit of over P50 million when Belmonte assumed office. Today, Quezon City has over P5.3 billion in cash deposits, including revenues of more than P1.3 billion as of this date.

For Cruz to say that Quezon City is the "richest city in the country today."

A panel of experts on local governance administration recently adjudged Belmonte as "the most outstanding city mayor of the Philippines."

These are unofficial awards and honors received by Belmonte and his administration.

The chamber and other business organizations in Quezon City honored Belmonte in a testimonial dinner last Dec. 18 in appreciation to him for the many positive changes and reforms he has undertaken to transform Quezon City into a quality community.

—ADRIAN C. ILLETO,
president and CEO, Quezon City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Aurora Boulevard, Quezon City

Ople's biggest legacy

THE HONORABLE Secretary of Labor and Employment takes strong exception to the conclusion of Jerome Aning that "Ople's biggest legacy will be his 1989 opposition to the ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement."

It is not for any reporter to predict history's judgment of the late senator and for her/him to necessary the is to report only the facts.

For him to say that Ople's most outstanding of the VFA was his biggest legacy would be unfair to the individual and collective wisdom of the senators who, after full debate, voted for the VFA.

That senator's term off the mark. The VFA is only one of several chapters in the Philippines' storied history of forging close socio-economic and political ties with the United States as a major ally, whereas, history is fully complete in its rendition of the services of Ople's caliph, more important considerations in the Filipinos' struggle for social justice and economic self-reliance, the revision of the country's labor laws and the promulgation on May 1, 1974 of Presidential Decree 443, otherwise known as the Labor Code of the Philippines.

That is Ople's biggest among his numerous legacies.

—NICOLAS FARAONAL,
director, Department of Labor and Employment, Information and Public Service, 5-F BOLI Bldg., San Lazaro, Manila

Like an African country

THE PHILIPPINES is like an African country plunked right in the middle of Southeast Asia. In contrast to our resurgent neighbors, we are like an African country, hopping from one crisis to other. We are also not like an African country: grab-riddled and inefficient. The only difference is that the Philippines—failing to name a literacy rate of almost 100 percent, I cannot understand why we Filipinos, who are supposed to be one of the better educated people in Asia, allow our politicians to rob us blind.

The classic reason why we are in a state of perpetual crisis and are lagging behind most of our neighbors is because we are a nation of lawyers. Ish are a country flooded with lawyers, we put the top 10 bar topnotchers on the front page of all newspapers. They should become the top MBA graduates or MIT, or La Salle civil lawyers, or engineering graduates of La Salle, UP, DLSU, etc.

Also, I cannot understand what is so great about the legal profession when our legal system is one of the worst in the region. Our country is unfit—idiots become we have too many lawyers, for lawyers are conflict-oriented, that is what they are trained for, they are not solution-oriented (unlike businessmen or engineers).

Singapore is extremely building laws and modern port facilities to make trading and unloading of goods more efficient and cheap. Groups from Korea is upgrading its science facilities and is now the best science country in the world, to improve its competitive trust. Malaysia is building a new city, Cyberjaya, to attract high-tech industries. In our case we are busy debating the constitutionality of one of the unconstitutionality of that, the result is a poor country.

Our President today claims to be an economist for has no economic policy, she has no stand on anything, she sits the with the wind and makes decisions based on political expediency. I noticed this even when she was still a senator. She is forever campaigning, positively shooting down anything when we than perhaps better.

When we need is a relatively young spoon as president, like Manny Pangilinan of PLDT, Jerry Cunnigham of BPAK, Lance Gokongwei of JG Summit, Jaime Alfonsin Zobel of Ayala Corp., etc. These are the kind of people we need to run the government, they are well educated, aware, dedicated and very good managers. The government is like a big corporation, only bigger, you need a very experienced manager to run it. It is business that makes a country progressive and who better to run the country than people who successful business.

I believe that the Makati Business Club, the PCCI, the IBP, people from the academe such as the UP Law Center, the department of economics of both UP and Ateneo, the ADB, former and La Salle business schools, as well as civil society groups should meet and hammer out the type of government and the policies necessary to get this country going.

—ADOLFO ILETO,
Eisenhower Street, Greenhills, San Juan, MM

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Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Auditor, son killed in grenade blast

SWEET ANTICIPATION
Old toys and clothing are tossed over for three-year-old Amaarah Trias, Dagan, Benguet as they await the gift-giving activity by the Pinas Greater Club.

COTABATO CITY—A government auditor and his 14-year-old son died when unidentified suspects lobbed a grenade inside their house in Zenaida Subdivision in Barangay Rosary Heights here on Saturday evening.

The attack on Mystino Pandian, 54, auditor of the Department of Education Maguindanao division office happened in the wake of a controversy surrounding the Depdiel-to-be Instrumentation Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) over the non-remittance of health care premiums to the Government Service Insurance System.

PO2 Eduardo Tolete, police investigator, said Pandian and his son, Amir, died upon arrival at the Cotabato Regional Medical Center (CRMC).

Pandian's other children, Jasmin, 18, a second year high school student, and Ramon, 22, were already inside the house when the other child Micah, 17, escaped unscathed.

Tolete said Pandian and his children were watching television when the suspects hurled the grenade.

The explosion landed right at the house's living room, where the victims were.

He said Pandian threw himself on the grenade in an effort to save his family.

"I had the feeling that the explosive with his body all of them could have died," Tolete said.

Police refused to comment on the motive of the attack.

About a week ago, hundreds of students staged a peaceful rally in front of the Depdiel-ARMM office against the non-remittance of their GSIS contributions. Edwin Fernandez and Rene-Boy de Guzman, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Cold weather makes freshwater fish sick

CAGAYAN CITY—The cold weather is good for excursions and fun gymnastics, but not for some varieties of fish that get sick and eventually die.

If there is a limited supply of fish on the customers' dinner tables during the holidays, it is because freshwater varieties and those grown in fishponds could not stand the biting cold, said Wendy Rosario, chief of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources' research center here.

Rosario has advised fishpond operators not to overstock their ponds at the time of the year because fish are more prone to diseases.

"The diseases are [caused by] opportunistic organisms from the environment that strike tilapia and [mudfish] when they grow weak. Worms, parasites and bacteria grow to the bellies of these fishes," he said.

Such fishes, however, are safe to eat as long as they are cooked well, according to Rosario.

He said indigenous and freshwater fishes such as catfish, mudfish, carp, gurami and redbreast tilapia like tilapia and dalagang bukid are usually stricken by parasites during the cold season as their growth is stunted.

Rosario says said nutrient is zero nonetheless because of the cold climate. The nutrient looks for food in warm waters, he said.

Farmers in Bagulin City and other landlocked areas in the Cordillera, where temperature is low, stock their ponds with a few tilapia so they could harvest and sell it in December and January when there is not enough supply of fish in the market.

In Baguio City, a limited supply of fish has been transported to the city's public market as the mercury dropped to 9.2 degrees Celsius on Dec. 21, the coldest temperature recorded since March 14 this year.

Rosario said he gave a group of residents from Mt. Province a supply of freshwater silver perch (Bidyanus bidyanus) from Australia because the species was found to breed during the cold season. Goltoh Mikaila, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

New tax collection scheme goes on-line

ILIGAN CITY—Tax evaders in this city would now have to find new ways to elude the government.

The Tax Revenue Assessment and Collection System (TRACS) has gone into full operation here on Friday.

Officials said cheating businessmen would no longer have a way of escaping tax collection because of the sophisticated system of assessing and collecting taxes.

The city has been using TRACS since 1998 but on limited basis only.

But officials expect that with its full operation, the city's tax collection would be more efficient.

Rudy Nadurog, acting operations manager of the Iligan City Treasurer's Office, said since its use in 1998, TRACS, "is multi-user and multi-tiered network application that can be posted into the Internet" has greatly reduced corruption and has improved the tax collection efficiency here.

He said with the full operation, taxpayers could now browse their assessments on-line and that this could further cut the need for tax collectors to go to the clients.

Nadurog said the use of the system in the past has prevented attempts from tax evaders to bribe revenue personnel.

"This is because of the strict computerized procedure of the system," Nadurog explained while showing a detailed flow of the collection process.

"We would like to collaborate with this victory as (TRACS) has addressed the historic problem of red tape in the city and promoted transparency," Mayor Franklin Quijano said of the computerized system funded by mean-less aid for international development (AusAID).

Iligan is only one of the few cities that use the TRACS.

Quijano said the system has not boosted the city's revenue collection "because of the shutdown of the National Steel Corp." Jeffrey Montaga and Joseph Aloha Echavez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Baguio residents await GMA, as First Gentleman slips into City of Pines

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo slipped quietly into Baguio on Saturday despite Malacañang's announcement that members of the First Family would no longer hold their annual Christmas break here in deference to the victims of the Southern Leyte landslides.

Arroyo attended the annual Christmas party of Lt. Antonio Carlos Fidencio Bautista at Camp John Hay on Saturday afternoon, according to police and guests of the party.

He was accompanied by his youngest son Dato Arroyo was also seen at the Baguio Country Club on Saturday night.

Senior Supt. Francisco Manalo Jr., Baguio police director, said Arroyo and his son left Baguio on Sunday "still incognito."

His Malacañang, during her visit to Dagupan City on Friday, said her confidence that she was donating her family's vacation budget to the survivors of the Southern Leyte flash floods and landslides that killed at least 200 people.

She went to Dagupan after Christmas Day and inspected several projects there, but flew back to the Palace, instead of going to Baguio where she and her family spend their annual holidays.

New year vacation

Unconfirmed reports, however, indicate that the President's family members are sending this week for a private New Year vacation.

Vice Mayor Betty Lourdes Tabanda said assurances were made during the party that the Macapagal would return to the city to attend the Rizal Day celebration on Tuesday.

But Baguio residents have been hoping to see the Macapagal herself celebrate Rizal Day at the Rizal Park here, just as she did a year ago.

Joel Cariño, chair of the militant Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), said the First Family's decision to avoid Baguio "appeared calculated to avoid explaining to the public why she broke her promise not to run for a full presidential term next year."

Explanation

Cariño said Mr. Macapagal made a bold, and even heroic, move but "now when she announced that she was sacrificing her political ambitions in order to unify the country and step up economic crisis.

But the President withdrew that commitment in October this year, when she opted to run for president in the 2004 polls.

Cariño said Mr. Macapagal's decision "to break her promise in Baguio" was ironic because it was one pledge her 1.05-using voters had expected most in her 'heroic' move in the name of former President Joseph Estrada 2001.

Holding the traditional Rizal Day rites in Baguio for a date time would risk putting the President on "the political darkness," Cariño said.

"But the people of Baguio needs an explanation, because when she declared five political sacrifices last year) on the same spot, the people residents believe that she has stopped politicking," she said.

"Now, all we know about her is that she eat break her own word," she added.

MEMBERS of the Task Force dance the "salsa artist" during their Christmas party.

Xmas brings new school rooms for Ifugao pupils

By Ben Macas Bawa
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LAGUI, Ifugao—The cold breeze of the Christmas season brought joy and hope for the villagers of Barangay Lagui here as their wish for additional classrooms were realized on Dec. 22.

The villagers, composed of school officials, parents and their children, gathered in the school compound and witnessed the groundbreaking of two classrooms—gifts from the Filipino community in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates and two Ifugaotan employers.

The classrooms will be built within the Hapid National High School Hingal Annex (HNHSHA) compound. Community folk said the new school buildings would spare them from repairing makeshift classrooms that are perennially damaged by typhoons and strong winds.

The construction of the two 7 meter by 7 meter classrooms, each equipped with a toilet and blackboard, will be started this January. Those were donated by the Filipino community of Abu Dhabi and Julius Cline and a certain "Mr. L.Y." of Malaysia.

The Filipino workers and the Malaysian donated a total of $6,000 (P222,360) for the "Classroom Calling to Kinamayaang Filipino Abroad (CCKFA)" in Luisa, according to lawyer Delmer Cruz, deputy administrator of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

Cruz said the project was coordinated by the dispatchmates of labor and employment, foreign affairs and ambassador and the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Magpapasalamat kami sa pinadating ng dalawang silid-aralan dito. Magsisikap pa rin ako at ng iba pa na anim 7th ang grade dahil sa dito pupunta because the situation of our children here is difficult. This is a good gift...a big help to us," said Lawrence Bulanon, 28, president of the local Parents, Teachers and Community Association (PTCA).

Bulanon said PTCA members usually build additional classrooms which classes are the room, but of academic increases every school year.

The school, established and built in 2003, has 327 students, who are scattered in seven semi-motivated to the four levels.

He said their children, once inside the makeshift classrooms, have to contend with smoky and wet grounds during the rainy season, something hurt to mosquito-borne.

Principal Pastillas, 59 HNHSHA teacher, said the school was built in crisis of the demand of villagers and local officials to accommodate students from nearby villages.

The school started with a single classroom in 2003. Since then, the school has only two "permanent" classrooms, forcing many students to attend classes in makeshift rooms built by residents themselves.

"Those students have to travel an hour and spend for their transportation when they go to school (in the town center). Their parents have to spend the rations of the school have to answer their economic difficulties," Pastillas said.

Another problem, he said, is the lack of library facilities and books in the school.

With HNHSHA accommodations students from the villages of Lamut, Kiangan and Lagawe towns.

"Our prayers for additional classrooms have been fulfilled. There are still many students because they are far to go to here and now students from Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino [went to school here], but we can no longer accommodate them. The number of enrollees is still increasing," Pastillas said.

Cruz said the project was the brainchild of Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz. Bulnan said was meant to address the critical classroom shortage in many parts of the country.

"This is indeed very timely because Hapid's pupil classroom ratio is 1:76 pupils per classroom, according to the education department. They are really in dire need of additional classrooms," said Cruz.

He said the classroom came with the government's intention to promote quality education in the country as employees continue to send their hard-earned money and sweat.

He said the classroom assistance to Ifugao would add to the recently inaugurated classroom in Cabarroguis City (10 classrooms), Aritao, San Luis (two classrooms), Santa Ana (two classrooms) and Bayombong (two classrooms).

Task Force Davao to stay—Duterte

DAVAO CITY—Mayor Rodrigo Duterte on Friday announced that the Task Force Davao, which was created in the aftermath of the explosions that hit the airport in March and the Sasa Wharf in April, would stay and continue to provide security to the people of the city.

"As long as I am the mayor, I will be there stay," he told the reporters.

At least 48 people died and dozens injured in the explosions, which shattered the city's sense of security. Duterte said the presence of the Task Force has provided a great sense of security to Davaoeños until the continuing threats to Mindanao.

He said the Task Force has also obviously discouraged terrorists from launching another attack in the city, although, he added, they could already be willing to act anew.

Bonnie Serra, president of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCCI) agreed with Duterte's assessment.

He said because of the presence of the Task Force, which is composed of soldiers, police and militiamen, the business sector has undoubtedly recovered from the fallout of the bombings.

Joint investments were boosted by the presence of the Task Force that the P1-billion target for 2012 had already been surpassed as early as last month, he pointed out.

"The major contributing factor is the presence of the Task Force. Serious investments reached P1.2 billion by November. The Task Force has done its job and it gave confidence of stability for investors and would be investors," Serra said.

The business community was supportive of a longer stay for the Task Force, Serra said.

Col. Gandencio Angliman Jr., Task Force chief, said the Task Force would continue to "terrorize Davao City against terrorism."

Angliman, however, admitted that although the Task Force could "reduce the risk," the police's vigilance is still "the ultimate defense" against terrorism. Joaelle Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau

6-year-old boy appeals for help for brain tumor operation

By Jessie Badilla
PDI Mindanao Bureau

KIDO

(MIKO) CITY—The prayer reads "I am Michael Paolo Empino. I am six years old. My friends call me Kido. I have a tumor inside my head. The doctors took out most of it last month. It is not starting to grow again. I need the Gamma Knife Treatment in order I really go away and not come back. Please join the Fun Run so that I can pay for my treatment in January. I hope this will be your Christmas gift to me."

Kido already underwent two surgeries. The first was "chinitis" and "with "ventriculostomy" on Oct. 25. The operation was to remove the brain tumor and drain the water that had accumulated in his left and right brain ventricles which, according to doctors, caused his severe and persistent headaches.

Kido's first operation was successful but another treatment for his condition for three days to see if the water from both his left and right brain ventricles would drain. Unfortunately, only water on the right side was drained.

Doctors said there was "no communication" between his left and right brain ventricles causing the headaches even after the operation.

Operation

On Oct. 28, Kido again underwent an operation. This time, to relieve water and allow regular drain of water from both ventricles and was given a permanent ventriculoperitoneal (VP) shunt.

A VP shunt is surgery performed to relieve intracranial pressure caused by hydrocephalus. The flow of is diverted from the brain's ventricles into the abdominal cavity or, in rare instances, the pleural space in the chest.

Kido is now a candidate for radiotherapy or radiosurgery to excise the remaining tumor. The sooner possible time to prevent it from growing fast.

His parents, Denton and Catherine, opted to let Kido undergo a Gamma Knife surgery, a non-surgical and painless for the treatment of brain disorders. This is said to be the preferred treatment for cancerous brain tumors worldwide.

It is a non-invasive alternative to conventional surgery and radiation the risk of surgical complications, like hemorrhage and infection and other side effects.

The procedure is after 35 to 50 percent less risky than the conventional surgery.

Kido's father, Denton, said he is worried because the operation is very expensive. The operation will cost at P450,000 or about P500,000. We have already exhausted our financial resources for Kido's first two operations. We hope and pray that someone would be good Samaritan who will help Kido attain his dream," they told the reporter.

Kido also sings the karaoke.

"My favorite song is "Sisters Dear Forever" and "Yesterday Once More" but my most favorite song is "Where is the Love," he said.

Yesterday his family and friends held a fun run to raise funds for his operation hopefully next year.

For those who want to lend their hands to the family, Denton can be reached through his mobile phone numbers 09178482500 and Catherine 09194001640.

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Cops bust syndicate selling fake dollars in N. Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—Thirteen members of a group involved in the sale and distribution of fake United States dollars and bank certificates in Northern Luzon were arrested in San Fernando City, La Union on Friday, report's from the Ilocos regional police office said.

Interested from the suspects were $162,950,000 in counterfeit bills and fake treasury and gold bullion certificates from banks and insurance firms in the US and Europe.

A report by Senior Supt. Franklin Jesus Bueron, head of the team that arrested the suspects, said eight suspects were arrested in an entrapment operation at Poro Point, San Fernando City, La Union. Senior Supt. Roman Espiritu said the operation led to the confiscation of fake $100 bills and fake gold bullion certificates.

NINE suspects of a fake dollar syndicate were arrested by the police after an entrapment operation in Poro Point, San Fernando City, La Union. Senior Supt. Roman Espiritu said the operation led to the confiscation of fake $100 bills and fake gold bullion certificates. [illegible]

Those arrested were Rolando Aquino, 42, Ernesto Castanaveng, 50, Jun Ontero, 35, Gloria Baizas, 37, Rudy Bingaen, 49, Edna Bertgaen, 43, Maria Consolacion Ancontes, 49, Elenita Pondia, 49, Gallardo Baraoa, 56, Leonardo Alapide, 48, Marietta Mejia, 37, Pedro Bermisa, 40, and Lilia Rosario, 53. They are residents of Baguio City, La Union and Pangasinan.

Police reports said the group sells the fake dollar bills and bank certificates in Baguio and San Fernando City.

Also recovered from the suspects were a Mitsubishi Lancer car, a Pajero 3L-300 pickup and a Kia Bonta van.

Bueron said a certification issued by Ramon Espejo, manager of the Bank of the Philippine Islands in San Fernando City, confirmed that the dollar bills were fake.

The report said some of the bank certification that the suspects were carrying have the signatures of the late President Ferdinand Marcos and former Central Bank governor Jaime Laya.

PIA Northern Luzon Bureau

Probe threats on PDI reporter, GMA urged

BAGUIO CITY—The Philippine Tri-Media Association (Philtima) has asked President Macapagal-Arroyo, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and police officials to conduct a "thorough and unrelated investigation on the threats received by Inquirer correspondent Edmundo Sousa Fuentes.

"Philtima strongly denounces the insidious and cowardly attempt of a person or some persons to intimidate the members of a colleague ... to write about morality," the group said in a one-page resolution on Sunday. The resolution, signed by Fuentes, president Minerva Calimayo on behalf of the group's officers and members, was sent by fax to the Inquirer's Northern Luzon Bureau office.

On Saturday, Fuentes received a funeral wreath from an unidentified sender. The wreath was delivered to his house in Calaoan town two days after the received threats from a man through calls and text messages to her mobile phone.

Fuentes, who covers Pangasinan for the Inquirer and also a crossover of Ilocos, said the threats would have been the result of her reports on jueteng operations in Pangasinan.

Reckless and the men who are threatening Fuentes has a "sick mind" and can be considered a "walking social menace unfit to mingle with a civilized community."

Philtima also appealed to Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., Philippine National Police chief, and Pangasinan police officials to identify and arrest the suspect immediately.

"Let it be known by this bad character . . . that the Ilocanos stands four-square behind Fuentes in the name of the holiest on which all institutions of democracy are based—freedom of speech and of the press," the group said.

Supt. Rhein Sandiego, Pangasinan police director, ordered Insp. Rolando Magno of the provincial police's special operations group and his men to investigate the threats after Fuentes reported it to the police.

Magno has already assigned a security aide to Fuentes.

Dr. Warnick, who represents the fourth district of Pangasinan, offered Fuentes assistance in whatever form, in investigating the matter. *PIA Northern Luzon Bureau*

Cops hit for slow probe of peasant leader's slay

By Marlon Ramos
PIA Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN, Laguna—Five days after the killing of former peasant leader Nestor Matalatala, the police have yet to come up with a clear lead on the real motive for the Dec. 22 murder of the former executive assistant of the mayor of San, Laguna.

Matalatala was killed by a lone gunman in front of his home last Sunday.

His widow, Flora, questioned why the police in charge of the case is not willing to speed up its investigation of the killing, saying that, "they did not bother to see and talk to me so as other members of our family."

Escape

Militant peasant and human rights groups also criticized the three local policemen who were supposedly standing less than 10 meters from where Nestor was gunned down.

"The policemen should have even explain their business there. They should also even up with a good explanation why they let the suspect escape," Kampanyan-Laguna secretary general Doris Garcia told the inquirer.

In a phone interview, Chief Inspector Ruben Lim, San Pablo police chief, said he would invite all the witnesses who saw the suspect pumping a single bullet on Nestor's face.

Dr. la Cuesa admitted that members of his team were near the crime scene when the incident happened. But he denied that the police had a hand in the killing.

He said the police tried to run after the gunman but there are not weapons "unfortunately" jammed when they tried to shot at the suspect.

"Why would we kill he (Nestor)? He was a municipal employee. In fact, we must were the first ones to help the victim and rushed him to a nearby hospital," he said.

Appeal

Matalatala's widow also appealed to the media to be sensitive and fair in reporting about her husband.

She said her husband "was just an ordinary farmer fighting for the people's right to live decently," and not the "former right hand of communist leader Gregorio Ruiz" as reported in a regular and several tabloids and broadsheets.

She told the inquirer that some tabloids even added the word as a former high-ranking official of the communist led New People's Army (NPA) operating in Southern Tagalog.

Matalatala feared that the insensitive media accounts of Nestor's killing could endanger the lives of their sons and other family members.

She said such incorrect information could make them likely targets of military and the police.

Matalatala was the chair of Pagkakaisa ng Uganan ng Bagong Maglahidalan sa Laguna until he suffered from a stroke that paralyzed half of his body in 2000.

Despite the disability, he managed to involve himself in the affairs of Nestor Mayor and helped Bay Mayor Edwin Ramos in his campaign in the last local elections.

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MECHANICS

Only 7 CPP cadres disciplined for bloody purges

From page A1

and say that it was wrong."

He says the Samar rebels have to have sought the forgiveness of some of the survivors and to have achieved "peace of mind."

"We consider Ernesto senior rather as right responsibility for the OPM," Tan is not minding my hands of my sins. We are accountable."

'Perpetrators'

A former member of the Mindanao Commission (Mindanao) declared, "We are the perpetrators."

Asked who should be held accountable for the purges, he said, "The leadership, the center of command, moral responsibility. It was accountable. We all are."

A former senior cadre who took part in transporting these, the assistant division campaign in Mindanao, said: "I said and agreed, party leaders should take the blame."

The Executive Committee of the CPP Central Committee, the entire Mindanao Commission, the regional committee of the Visayas and the regional executive committees in Mindanao have to be held accountable for [unreadable] Abra," he said, adding:

"Although some Mindanao secretary said absent in the organized executive committee meeting, all the Mindanao members were involved in the implementation of these."

The executive cadre pointed out that the involvement of Mindanao was not of the regional and regional executive committees were already engaged in acts in Western campaigns even before Abra was implemented.

FILE photo shows soldiers and civilians offering flowers at a reported grassland CPP purge victims in Candaba, Pampanga. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

"For the anti-infiltration purges [reported], the entire party Central Committee, as well as the commission and regional committees in affected regions, should be held accountable," he said.

Punishment

But despite the errors and the havoc that the purges wrought on the CPP it's Politburo and later its Central Committee never met any disciplinary action to only seven party officers, all of them involved in the OPM.

No other party official who had a hand in other anti-infiltration campaigns like Abra or Oriental Mindoro received disciplinary action. This, according to a member of the CPP Executive Committee, was part of the so-called "political brinkmanship" employed to save the party from further damage.

By the account of a former senior cadre, the Executive Committee members said regarding responding or defending other party officials: Apart from the seven [who had been] leadership errors in large parts of the country.

"The time in Mindoro for [unreadable] emotional," the committee member was quoted as saying. "The remaining cadres who were involved in these acts, especially the top cadres [if they are punished]."

In a statement issued on Feb. 5, the Executive Committee said among those with the biggest accountability were officials who "were directly involved in the purges, especially in 1992 during 'The Second Reinforcement Movement.'"

The committee named five of them, but insisted most on other perpetrators still with the CPP who, it said, had already made amends.

"All leading cadres who had individual accountabilities recognizing the OPMR anti-infiltration hysteria were meted [out] various levels of disciplinary action, the highest being expulsion from the party," the committee said.

'Criminal renegades'

Most of those fully sickened edged their errors, accepted disciplinary action meted [out to] them, gave their all in rectifying the damage [that had been wrought], and made reinstitution all those involved were assisted in their rehabilitation, including those who did not have various accountabilities," it said.

Luis Jalandoni, chief negotiator of the National Democratic Front of which the CPP is a member, praised the Hiwas for Kapayapaan Abra as "criminal renegades," including those members of Mindanao who had joined the party.

Jalandoni, who is based in The Netherlands, said in an interview posted on a website in 2002 that the supposed renegades "were severely scolded the orthodox being pulled to them [OMR] by the Philippine military and police and [the] revolutionary movement in Mindanao to restore infiltration rather than to the military as they were pursuing."

"Because of their purely-military line, they did not pay attention to mass work, land reform, and other programs that benefit the masses such as literacy, economy, health and nutrition," he said.

Jalandoni said Ernesto Carolong did not name names but partly attributed the purges to an "intentional" line of thought among certain party leaders who espoused quick victory at the expense of painstaking mass work and solid organizing.

In the document titled "Reaffirm Our Basic Principles and Carry the Revolution Forward" dated Dec. 26, 1991, Liwanag said:

"The erroneous exposure of revolutionary and active bits brought about the liquidation and elimination of cadres and resources, the costly building of urban-based staff organs, and top heavy military staff [which] are vulnerable to the enemy's most ruthless kill of the mass base, the reduction of the mass base, the isolation and insecurity of the prematurely engaged and unsustainable armed units, district and demoralization to a purely military situation and [unreadable] and the creation of a [unreadable] purge of panic like the anti-infiltration hysteria."

Liwanag said this attitude of party leaders, which the proponents of the purges attributed to counter-infiltration, were a result of the "conservative and ebbing staff organs in the cities where the most vulnerable to surveillance and penetrative activities by the enemy."

In November 1992, the CPP Executive Committee said the "mechanical" application of the Mao Tse-tung 10% criterion and repeated cadres, including a big number of Central Committee members, mostly in the cities, resulting in "exposed setbacks of disasters and demoralizing consequences of [unreadable] in the peoples' democratic movement."

Rjs and RAs

Liwanag's attacks on the party's "conservatism" appeared to embody the "reservationist" line led to the breakup of the CPP into the reinvitationist (RJ) and reaffirmist (RA) factions in 1992. Those belonging to the RA group are still with the party, while those in the RJ group have more than it.

As a result, those involved in the anti-infiltration campaigns can be found in both the RJ and RA camps.

In human rights lawyer circles, those against blaming the purges only on those still with the CPP.

"We have to point out that, except the Left party, there is enough responsibility or blame to share among all the leaders of both the RA and the RJ factions, of the campaign or national characterization," Rolando M. Andres Jr. and others from on The Left Purges and their Human Rights Implications."

Andres, a professor of law at the Ateneo de Manila University, is a member of the National Democratic Front.

Andres, who is also a member of the Ateneo Civil, an international humanitarian organization, described the ongoing rebel purges on Samar and Leyte, said it would be short-sighted to solve the problem by the violation of human rights and international humanitarian law if the rebels were succeeded to put the blame on one's opponents within the Left.

"That way we will be missing the lessons of the past," he said, and find the few Left factions had agreed that the anti-infiltration campaigns were characterized by party abuse of human rights.

Conclusion: Finding closure

More students going underground, says NDF

DAVAO CITY—The number of college students who are going underground is increasing, according to the communist-led National Democratic Front in Mindanao.

In a phone interview with the Business section today, Jorge Madlos, NDF spokesperson for Mindanao, said this during the "Walk against the militarization" on Friday of the Communist Party of the Philippines alone, at least 50 college students decided their attention to join the Other People's Army.

He said most of the students, aged 18 to 24, were from the city and Cagayan de Oro.

Madlos said the students disagreed with the government's policies and that they were also motivated by the state of the country.

"They are still here in our camp undergoing 'upgrade,'" he said, adding that the growing interest in the underground movement of people from the urban areas had been brought by the all-out war in Mindanao.

The latter, the military's claim that the communist insurgency is waning, Madlos said, but he did not say how large the NPA had become.

NPA spokesperson Gregorio Agaloos Sonthey survived the Armed Forces of "using civilians and noncombatants as shield" in its effort "to stop the spread of communism."

"This is a cowardly practice by the AFP for the masses and the revolutionary forces strongly condemn, and which necessitates continued [participation] by the people in mass actions and the NPA in revolutionary armed struggle," Sanchez said. Anthony S. Alla, PIE Mindanao Bureau

How can accountability be pursued?

(Editor's Note: Following are excerpts from a paper delivered by Senior Justice Antonio at the PETE Forum recently on Aug. 20.)

THERE operations to [unreadable] armed groups in certain countries have emerged. International humanitarian law and human rights groups have also examined these questions, in both policy and operational levels.

One pioneering research on armed groups accountability dealt with the Khmer Rouge atrocities in Cambodia. Khmer Rouge, "three countries, of which the Philippines was one, were studied in terms of the context and the factors right abuses of armed groups. The framework that was made was to provide with basic approaches for future engagement with armed groups in pursuit for their accountability.

1. **Persuasion.** One could appeals armed groups by trying to persuade them that their cause is right and the various endeavors that would contribute to forming the truth about the events. Through persuasion, it might also be possible to convince an armed group to acknowledge the gravity of the events and to provide an official apology. The armed group could also assist in exhumation and documentation. Persuasion could be undertaken through dialogue, information and [unreadable] The use of media, the engagement of combatants and other tools could also be resorted to. What is important is that through persuasion, the armed group is willing to undertake measures that will ensure its accountability.

2. **Denunciation.** This approach has been one of the most favored tools of human rights organizations. Public naming and shaming [of the] perpetrators of armed groups is also [unreadable] The propensities of the perpetrators and the armed group, the armed group is forced to deal with a campaign against it for those crimes. Some of the tools used for this approach are the same tools used in human rights campaigns against violations, media exposure, urgent actions, lobbying, international and [unreadable] publishing [unreadable] are some of the methods of denunciation.

3. **Prosecution and punishment.** The questions related to this approach are: Is there a party to [unreadable] Is the [unreadable] to this approach. The other is because it is the most clear legal remedy has the legal obligation and the authority to undertake prosecutions and the punishment [unreadable] The purpose of this remedy is a valid resistance in using the term appropriate for those purposes. Prosecutions and punishment will nevertheless depend most only on the willingness of the state to undertake, and these have laws, but also on the political will and capability of the state.

For some, it would be a matter of choice in the principles of the moral movement. For others, it could be the only way.

4. **Working directly with armed groups, including capacity building.** A final approach is directly engaging the armed group itself in order to provide it with the capacity and the will to resolve the issue. This would necessarily entail efforts for capacity building. In using this approach, there is an objective of ensuring that the armed group respects international human rights and humanitarian standards, including the right of the survivors, victims and families to know the truth and to obtain justice. It would include working and collaborating with the armed group to find solutions to these issues. Obviously, the use of this approach is politically sensitive. It would first of all, in the Philippine context, depend not only on political will and capability but the political space as well. Questions on sincerity and trust are likewise unavoidable.

Victims, kin invoke international humanitarian law

From page A1

law because it is an embodiment of the system that they seek to overthrow," Sandra Cuadra Jimenez noted at the founding assembly of the Bayan Advocates for Trade, Justice and Healing (BATH) on Aug. 28.

Philippine opposition armed groups accept international law because they aspire to take over a territory as a government and to join the international community of states if they succeed, Jimenez explained. "Guerrilla [and] human rights consultant and trainer.

NDF

On July 5, 1996, the CPP and the New People's Army, as allied revolutionary organizations in the National Democratic Front, signed the latter's unilateral Declaration of Undertaking to apply the Geneva Conventions of 1949 on Protocol I of 1977. The NDF declared its accession to Protocol II on Aug. 11, 1991.

Amnesty and agreements that the armed groups themselves had signed established the need for such a body.

She said the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law between the NDF and the Philippine government was one example.

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions is applicable to the CPP and rebellious campaigns because it is deemed to have achieved the status of customary international law applicable to parties to a domestic armed conflict, Jimenez said.

The article provides the minimum standards that must be respected by all parties to the [unreadable] including armed groups. The standards are aimed at protecting persons taking no part in hostilities" for any reason.

They include members of armed forces, any partisans, regardless of status, under the control of the detaining authority, and even those who have already surrendered, put in hostilities but who are captured and who are then entitled to protection, Jimenez said.

Prohibition

Under Common Article 3, the minimum standard to be followed by all parties to a conflict involves to use detention or organized civilian to the absolute prohibition of:

- Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
- Taking of hostages;
- Outrage upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment;
- Passing of sentences and carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

"With the provisions, the discussion that a person is a spy or a deep penetration agent is totally irrelevant," Jimenez said.

"It's up to council in the act, it is true that he or she receive benefits from the terms of a prisoner of war that international humanitarian law has eliminated or, particularly under the Third Geneva Convention. And even then, the Third Geneva Convention further provides that such open caught in the act must be treated with humanity and must not be punished without value and regular trial," she said.

Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions, which applies [unreadable] to internal conflicts, expands the protection offered by Common Article 3.

"Article applicable to the Philippine conflict where the threshold requirement had been reached, the extensive guarantees provided by Protocol II apply to all the parties," Jimenez said.

The "Human Treatment" provisions of Protocol II, parties Judy Amole I. that civil such as "fundamental Guarantees" and Article 5 that deals with "persons whose liberty has been restricted," list the minimum protection guarantees that the various rebel groups could have been provided.

Under these] norms, stipulated in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions as well as relevant provisions of Protocol II, it is clear that armed groups could and should be held accountable for violations of international humanitarian law," Jimenez said.

Jimenez cited current international human rights discussions that had not envisaged of armed groups as subjects [unreadable] were held directly accountable under international human rights law.

One approach looks at "duties" under international human rights law, a point echoed by Preamble to Article 29 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights that provides: "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible."

Another approach, according to Jimenez, looks at the harm to the victim rather than the role of the state in the perpetration of the harm.

Restitution

"This, therefore, looks not only at the protection and restitution of the individual harmed but also at the redress by the individual accountable," she said.

One evolving approach that is slowly gaining ground calls for the direct applicability of human rights norms on the actions of the non-state actors, particularly armed groups.

Jimenez cited the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, which has repeatedly called for armed groups in Algeria and in Sudan to stop the killings, even though the mandate is based on international human rights standards.

The establishment of the International Criminal Court high-lighted the further development of international criminal law, Jimenez said.

She said the creation of individual responsibility for the acts perpetrated had been firmly established as the basis for the culpability of the alleged perpetrator, whether they were affiliated to state or to the state.

She also said members of armed resistance groups, and even individuals acting on their own behalf, in most cases, could be held accountable for international crimes.

Jimenez said war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide had been recognized as the principal categories of most serious crimes.

The court covers violations of international customary and treaty law under international humanitarian law and war committed against "the enemy."

Crimes against humanity

Crimes against humanity are described against civilians or persons who do not take part or no longer take part in armed hostilities. They may be directed. Therefore, it is not necessary to be [unreadable]

A crime against humanity involves the perpetration of certain acts—such as murder, torture, slavery, rape or persecution—that are part of a systematic or widespread practice.

The perpetrator must be part of a policy of the authorities or is allowed by them.

Jimenez said isolated acts of inhumanity are part of a pattern could not be considered crimes against humanity.

But an individual may still be guilty of a crime against humanity, even if he or she has perpetrated just a single act, if that is part of a policy or widespread or systematic practice.

Jimenez said offenses categorized as crimes against humanity may be committed by many agents, as well as members of armed groups. Crimes against humanity may be prosecuted even many years after they were committed.

"It believes as to reflect, based on documentation as well as the testimony of the victims, if the acts perpetrated during the conflict could be labeled as war crimes or crimes against humanity," she said.

Based on international standards, the CPP-NPA, the leadership and the participants can be held accountable for the blunder and [unreadable] campaigns, according to Jimenez.

But she issued a caveat: "[A] genuine quest for justice would hold persons responsible for their actions in the past, regardless of [how] persons may be right now and whatever their roles are at present.

"Otherwise, it would be those hypocrites to hold someone responsible for [unreadable] because the latter happens to be on the 'right' group or the 'right' position. The failure of the perpetrators to more than this

Int'l aid pours in for Iranian quake victims

From page A1

drones said Saturday it would send 76 tons of medical supplies and about 200 rescue and medical experts.

The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iran and last year identified Georgia as being the country's new part of an "axis of evil" with former Iraq and North Korea.

"We gladly welcome any assistance from the United States," said Akbar Alami, the governor of the provincial capital, Kerman city, on Saturday.

Thirty-five foreign planes, including American's, have landed in Iran bearing aid, the chief spokesperson of Iranian Civil Aviation, Jamie Pour Sabaghian, told the official Islamic Republic News Agency.

The inhabitants of Bam complained of a shortage of drinking water on Sunday. Relief workers were handing out bottled water, but there was not enough.

Looting

The Associated Press saw at least four young men looting Hima shops in the city center. Two teenagers ran from the one store holding packets of biscuits.

Fabrice Maistre abducted Mohamed Lari told the AP that 31 emergency police officers were being set up to guard the city to ensure security.

Almost all the thousands of homeless did manage to sleep in tents Saturday night, unlike Friday night when most had only blankets between themselves and the sky in temperatures close to freezing.

The tremors massively exhausted the number of injured at 30,000.

Ali Ansari, a professor at the U.S. Iran from Tehran, suffered such extreme damage because most of the buildings are made of unreinforced mud brick and the quake was unusually shallow in the earth's crust, at only 10 kilometers deep, Dr. Barry Hart, a USGS seismologist.

"The communities in the past of Iran are really not subject to earthquakes," said Hart, head of the National Earthquake Informa-

THE HAND of a victim is covered by rubble in the city of Bam in southeastern Iran after a powerful earthquake hit the region Friday. At least 25,000 were killed and 30,000 were injured in the earthquake, with new casualties feared. AFP

tion Center in Golden, Colorado. "It's very sad and unfortunate."

Aftershocks registered as high as 5.3, according to the geophysics institute of Tehran University.

Searchers carried the injured in their arms, on stretchers and in the backs of trucks, seeking help outside Bam's ruined hospitals or at the airport while awaiting evacuation to Kerman, the provincial capital about 110 km away or other cities.

More 130 people, including an infant were pulled alive from the rubble, Swedish envoy Hamid Ansari said. The baby was found more than 24 hours but was listed in stable condition at a hospital, he said.

Iran opened its air space to all planes carrying emergency supplies and waived visa requirements for foreign relief personnel.

"The deadline is for days for us to move all of our aircraft," President Mohammad Khatami said.

Bare hands

The leader of an Iranian relief team, Ahmad Hajali, said he found the toll could reach 40,000. Of one street in Bam, 200 bodies were extracted from the rubble in a single hour on Saturday, he said.

In another part of Bam on Saturday a man bombed more in the 50s, saying the whole town community to need villages in the southeastern corner of Iran, searched with soup soldiers in Iran since Iraq with their bare hands and a single shovel.

What cars were in the house were flattened piles of rubble and dust. He pointed to where the bedroom should have been, seemingly resigned that none of his three teenage children or his wife would be found alive.

He hunted as he spotted a shoulder hand protruding from a red pajama sleeve in the debris.

Behind him, the body of a girl in her teens was uncovered, and quickly covered with a blanket. Then the bodies of his son and a woman in her 40s were found.

His son was silent.

Incumbent neighborhood, some interrupted Interior Minister Lari as he spoke to reporters Saturday.

"My father is under the rubble," the man said, tears rolling down his face. "I've been asking for help since yesterday, but nobody has come to help me. Please

RP to send rescue team

THE SUBIC Bay Metropolitan Authority search and rescue team is to be dispatched to Iran to join international humanitarian relief efforts to help victims of the earthquake that struck the southeastern city of Bam, Kerman province, last Friday, Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr. announced Sunday.

Lina said the team will be composed of firefighters, doctors, rescuers and security personnel and will fly to Iran carrying tools, including the so-called "jaws of life" hydraulic machines to lift rubble and search for survivors.

The National Disaster Coordinating Council is currently preparing the deployment of the Philippine contingent. AFP

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helpless. I want my father alive."

Lari acted to calm the man and asked rescuers to help him.

"There is not a standing building in the city. Bam has ceased [and] is wrecked," the minister said.

The earthquake collapsed the walls of the local prison, allowing all 800 inmates to escape, guard Abdul Hussein said.

"The entire downward zone of Bam resident—a medieval fortress that is the city's best known structure. The tallest section, including a distinctive square tower, crumbled like a used cookie.

The official news agency Ilnews, considered declaring the citadel a protected World Heritage Site.

Some of the citadel's walls were still standing on Saturday, but they were damaged.

"My capital is leveled," said Reza Haseini, a 25-year-old mechanical student, in tears streaked through the dust that covered his face and his bruised face. "I've lost two residential my friends and I've lost my history, my citadel."

Iran has a history of devastating earthquakes, including one of magnitude 7.3 that killed about 10,000 people in northeast Iran in 1990. AP

Prosecutors fear Estrada won't return

From page A1

And the prosecution, Manolo Lamberto said the decision by the court was "highly irregular," saying Estrada's alleged crimes characterically carried the death penalty and did not qualify him for bail.

Maybe they think that this is a Christmas gift for Erap, but they

[illegible] against the public," she said, arguing that police officers who would accompany Estrada to the United States would not enjoy the diplomatic immunity.

"They can't even touch Erap while he's in 23 minutes. If they try to limit his movements, they can be sued for grave coercion," Lamberto said. "The worst law is found: a person charged with a capital offense to escape. That's what it did."

President Macapagal-Arroyo has softened up the decision, maintaining that Estrada was acting and should be allowed to get treatment abroad, given he was a former President.

But critics have claimed that Estrada's trip was part of Macapagal's move to detain his political enemies ahead of the May 2004 polls, in which she is expected to seek a second term. Estrada remains the opposition's de facto leader and still wields considerable influence.

US visa

The latter political group Kampanyang called on the US Embassy to deny Estrada's expected application for an entry visa.

Crispin Beltran, chair of the labor sector-based party Anakpawis, said the United States should be shutting the escape of a criminal, not trail if it gave Estrada the travel document.

"We can should buy this (humanitarian grounds), especially since it was ex-President who continues to be tampered and

[illegible] pressured by the current administration," Beltran said in a statement yesterday.

He said Malacañang's promise to assist Estrada to get a US visa should be the "final straw...the last ear that will sever the ties between Macapagal-Arroyo and her remaining People Power Unifier," Beltran said. AFP and Norman Bordadora

No way, GMA says . . .

From page A1

it's against the law and we'll enforce the law," Ms Macapagal, who is seeking a fresh six-year term in the May balloting, said at a talk with reporters.

The commission for National Democratic Front recently said that all candidates, including Ms Macapagal, would be required to pay a "permit-to-campaign" fee so they would be allowed to campaign in areas controlled by the New People's Army.

Based on new guidelines and policies for the 2004 elections, the NDF said candidates would have to pay the fee in full before they are issued permits.

The NDF, according to a rebel spokesperson, is following suit with the practice of allowing candidates to pay half of the fee before the elections and the other half after the counting. Losers usually no longer pay the unpaid balance, he said.

Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, Armed Forces spokesperson, yesterday said the NPA was "ludicrous."

"I think they are only joking," Garcia said. "We're going to ride themselves."

The Philippine National Police also urged candidates not to pay the communist rebels one centavo, saying the PNP had enough intelligence and police units would campaign in rebel areas.

Deputy Director General Victor Gil, the PNP chief for operations, said candidates needed to request security and the PNP would assign officers to accompany them during campaign rallies in NPA guerrilla zones.

Gil made the statement in the wake of pre-election research by the NDF that both police and the military would not prevent communist rebels from collecting permit-to-campaign fees from politicians.

"I beg to disagree," he told the media. "Our provincial commands have enough men to ensure all candidates who will request security."

Gil said PNP officials overseeing police operations and projects in Mindanao had called attention to "exaggerated" the claim made by Jorge Madlos, NDF spokesperson, that the NPA collected two million from candidates in southern Philippines during the 2001 elections.

He said the area controlled by the NPA were not that extensive.

"We're talking of just five to five provinces here, not an entire province or region," he explained.

According to Gil, communist rebels usually collect PTC fees in February and March when campaigning gets under way. Rebels send letters to candidates, informing them that they have to get a common amount before they can campaign in NPA-controlled areas.

Candidates for governor are usually charged P500,000, those running for a congressional seat between P300,000 and P500,000, and those for mayor between P50,000 and P300,000.

"This practice would not flourish if candidates would not give in," Gil said. "Since their only concern is their safety from the NPA, the PNP has a solution to that." Reports from GMA Cabanatuan Bureau and Norman Bordadora

BUSINESS

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4th quarter growth seen at 4.4%

By Cielrae S. Ramos

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is expecting growth in the fourth quarter to match the 4.4-percent expansion in gross domestic product in the third quarter on account of increased consumer spending and continued improvements in services.

"I think our GDP would grow between 4.2 and 4.4 percent in the last quarter and this range would allow us to meet the 4.2-percent full-year growth target," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said.

The economy extended the 3.8- to 4.5-percent growth target and expanded by 4.4 percent in the third quarter, due to the strong showing of the farm sector in the last quarter, the target is to grow by as much as 4.6 percent.

The BSP chief said that strong consumer spending in the fourth quarter would drive the economy forward to match the previous quarter's improvement. At the same time, manufacturing and services would continue to pull through in response to increased consumer demand.

The agriculture sector must expand by about 3.2 percent, industry should accelerate by 4.7 percent, and services must improve by 5.3 percent in the current quarter to support the target GDP growth, according to economic managers.

While a bit delayed, the increase in exports in the last three months of the year should help push the growth momentum to target the end of the year, the BSP chief added. Export receipts are expected to grow by only 2 percent or even lower for the year against a target of 8-9 percent.

Here now, the government said the economy is increased by the GDP would grow between 4.0 and 5.4 percent on the back of an improving global economy and continued strength of the domestic industries.

Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri earlier said that the higher growth in 2000 would be achieved given the absence of factors that dragged down the economy the year, particularly the El Niño weather disturbance that caused lower farm output, and the Middle East conflict that affected global demand and exports.

Export growth should hit 10 percent until year while imports would continue expanding by 11

(Continued on A-2)

Bourse uncovers more trading violations

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange has uncovered more violations of the Securities Regulation Code by at least 13 brokerage firms in the aftermath of the Asian Commodities crisis (ACE) loc scandal.

Insider sources said the PSE and the Securities and Exchange Commission were still in a dilemma on whether to disclose the list of these so-called "bad brokers" to investors in the investing public.

The alleged violations were discovered after a PSE audit conducted found fraud and other violations by ACE, a brokerage which the local bourse recently took over with the go-ahead from the SEC.

Officials from the SEC and the PSE, through the compliance and surveillance group, had been meeting to address the issue of acting brokers prior to the Christmas holidays.

Unlike ACE, however, the SEC has yet to issue any cease-and-desist order against any of these brokers. The SRC's charges were still under study, Bersamin added.

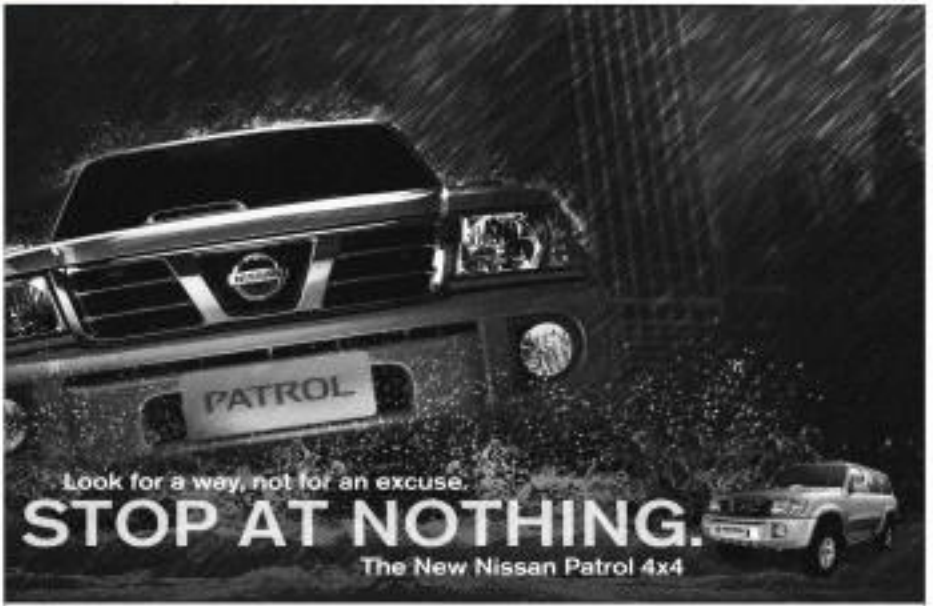
As a self-regulatory organization, the PSE has the mandate to police its own ranks.

At the case of ACE, the PSE is building up a count case after finding "reasonable ground" to believe that the brokerage had committed many counts of SEC violations.

The four provisions allegedly violated were Sec. 26, which declares it unlawful to engage in anything that operates as a fraud or deceit upon any person.

Another violation cited was that of Sec. 20.2, which states "that" and "honest" dealings in securities and prohibits financial safeguards, including the establishment of minimum capital requirements, acceptance of custody and use of accounts of customers and the use of deposits balances clerks of customers.

The other violations concerned rent to brokers on the borrowings by members, brokers and dealers as a percentage of net liabilities and as the obligation to provide the SEC with records and reports as may come deemed necessary for the protection of investors.



Maybank
has made it to the FT500 list this year.
Maybank

Quota fish alive

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bengzon III

THROUGH no fault of theirs, several local garment companies lost and are still losing tens of money, in dollars, at that!

I heard that millions of dollars worth of shipment of locally made garments were waiting in Customs warehouses in the United States.

As usual, it was all thanks to our dearly beloved government. Again, somebody at the Department of Trade and Industry goofed.

And all that was just in time for the frenzied Christmas shopping in the world's richest consumers in the world's biggest economy—to rest the Philippines.

* * *

THAT country is of course the United States. Early this month, the US Customs slapped an embargo on several garment shipments from the Philippines.

To give you an idea on how painful such an embargo could be to Filipino garment importers, and up to the embargo was the shipment of one company alone worth $10 million.

That is a lot of money, a big fortune, as a matter of fact, particularly at this time of economic hardship for a company in an industry which is on exactly in the pink of health.

Local garment companies are losing out to their competitors in Asia, particularly China and Vietnam. I am not kidding. Believe you laugh, Vietnam is actually already exporting more garments than the Philippines.

The local garment companies needed that US Customs embargo like Glorietta's elevator needed another coffee outlet or an extra restroom. It's not good!

* * *

HERE what I gathered, the embargo had something to do with the Philippine quota on garments exports to the United States.

Selling garments to the US is not like selling fish in Farmers Market, dead at allie or whatever. There are strict rules to follow. The US imposes a limit.

It seems the Philippines already exceeded the limit on certain garment items, particularly knitted blouses and cotton pants, each in dozen pieces.

Unfortunately for the exporting local companies, the US Customs officials were limited to talk to their counterparts in the Philippines.

Into this poor Third World country, even banned items such as toxic wastes can come, as long as the importers, mali, "talk" to some big shots in Customs.

The US Customs enforces rules strictly on shipments from poor countries like the Philippines or of something which is intrinsically not as bad as toxic waste.

I mean, it's not as if pinis are radioactive materials, although Americans smugglers, boys and girls alike, love to wear them showing a lot of lower back cleavage.

* * *

ANYWAY, that was not the first time that the US Customs barred the entry of garment shipments from the Philippines, because we teamed-not-up quota.

It used to happen every now and then. Some government officials tried their best in managing the quota by making a killing by selling export allocation under the table.

This time around, nevertheless, top executives in the local garment industry were not ready to throw any accusation of corruption.

None of them could say whether or not somebody made money out of the US import quota, simply because none of them had any proof.

Still, it is clear that, if it was due to corruption, the reason for the US Customs embargo this time was pure and simple mismanagement... by the government, of course.

* * *

SOMETIME in the middle of the year, it became clear to the local garments industry that the country would extend its US quota on certain items.

The GTEE, or the Garments and Textile Export Board, was giving our temporary amounts export allocations over the counter.

Such an allocation must tap into the US export quota of the local garment companies which, with their good track record, earned the so-called permanent allocation.

They are usually the bigger companies. Thus they normally attract the bigger orders from the US.

Thus they more programs in case of item allocation to close the bulk of their shipment with the Christmas season, meaning, towards the latter part of the year.

Thus, when the government is a mood for a little commonsensical, by exercising the quota, for instance, only those companies suffer.

SEVERAL months ago, their buyers in the United States already warned them about the possibility that the Philippines would hit the US import limit.

The question which most of those buyers asked was, what was our government doing about the problem? They gave only one answer, which was... well, nothing!

By last November, it was already evident that the Philippines would exceed this quota, and the danger of that US customs embargo became real.

Still, the local garment industry tried to reason out with somebody at GTEE, asking him to seek assistance from Glorietta directly.

For one, Glorietta's called to "lend" the GTEE hostel during the time of Tita Cory, and she therefore must have a soft spot for the industry.

* * *

Moreover, Glorietta was such an avid supporter of the bag was launched by US President George Walker Bush, perhaps she could ask him for a small favor. Something like, you know, could our garment companies break the US trade and Customs rules please?

* * *

A GROUP of garment exporting firms asked the Palace for a favor to Danny Jacinto which they themselves volunteered to hand-carry to Washington.

The garment industry enjoyed the lobby once before the embargo. Nobody wanted a finger, not in the Palace and not in DTI.

That what I heard, somebody in the Palace whispered to Glorietta that it was such a small inconsequential thing to bother Presidential with.

Look, it would only mean millions of dollars to losses to local garment companies which are not exactly looking at a bright future because of mall competition from other businesses.

Finally, when the US Customs declared embargo, the Palace relented and gave the nod. It's the letter, the request to which, well, the US government promptly rejected.

* * *

NOW everybody is pointing at somebody else for the blame. Everybody of course does not want to catch the ire of Glorietta. People in the industry say anyway that still does not know what happened.

The head of the GTEE is the brother of local Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman. The GTEE is responsible for managing the quota.

Talk also just around the industry that somebody at DTI, an undersecretary, went too arrogant in favors in the views of the garment industry, particularly when it was obvious that the government was issuing too much one-time number up allocations.

Where the ax will fall, is hard to say. Maybe, most like, it will not, no one!

4th quarter growth seen at 4.4%

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percent.

Neri said that election spending from the private sector that is real, stand to reach P30 billion should help boost the GDP. He said he believed that the first half of the year leading to the elections would be "one big fiesta" nationwide.

Businessmen said that a moderate inflation this year of about 3.1 percent would support the growth objectives next year and sustain the regime of price stability. Inflation should average between 4 and 5 percent in 2004.

In 2002, the economy as measured by GDP grew by 4.4 percent, the strongest growth since the 1997 Asian crisis.

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Stocks . . .

Story on page B3

gaining. Even 1,222.24 the previous week as window-dressing continued to boost prices of blue-chips.

Bonny said even more for the Pisces would likely be at 1,400.

"In the first week of January, that's when there will likely be correction from the year-end window-dressing but usually January is also bullish," he said.

This week, Bonny said the focus would be on stocks like Lepanto Consolidated Mining, Oriental Petroleum, Manila Mining, Waterfront Philippines Inc., Bloomberry Hotel, Export and Industry Bank, SPI Technologies, Petron Corp., Ionics Inc. and Meralco Corp.

"With the close of the year for speculating, trading activity has diminished. The downward trending week has also affected buyer interest," said BPI Securities.

"We expect buying interest to continue to wane, perhaps with the index moving into negative territory over the next few trading days," it said.

BPI Securities added that selling pressure would likely to push up with the index ending in the New Year as short sellers in various start to unwind bought positions. Darlyn C. Jacinto

Filipinos favor opening up of RP to global competition

By Doris C. Dumlao

FILIPINOS favor the opening up of the country to global competition and are less wary on possible risks to local traditions and culture, according to an online survey by international research firm AC Nielsen.

The survey, which covered 7,200 consumers with internet access in 12 countries in the Asia Pacific region in October, indicat-

ed that most Asians were positive toward the impact of globalization although there may be concerns about national independence and local culture.

"Optimism in globalization is highest in the Philippines and Filipinos are even less concerned about the threat to local traditions and culture," said Rosemarie Bautista, AC Nielsen managing director for Southeast Asia.

The other countries covered were Australia, India, Korea, Thailand, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand and Taiwan.

The survey showed that 90 percent of Asians agreed that globalization was giving more access to news, entertainment and information, while concern in the Philippines was even higher at 96 percent.

Some 86 percent of Asians believed that globalization was giving access to the same quality of products available to anyone else in the world, while approval rating was likewise even much higher among Filipino respondents at 94 percent.

The percentage of Filipinos who agreed that globalization was creating more job and career opportunities stood at 84 percent, higher than the regional average of 77 percent.

Most Filipino respondents also agreed that globalization was making the country more vulnerable to crimes and events elsewhere in the world that can have a positive or negative impact on our local economy. The proportion was still high at 92 percent compared to the regional average of 88 percent.

The respondents also agreed that globalization was:

• changing values and making life too fast and impersonal (66 percent among Filipinos compared to the regional average of 54 percent), and

• breaking down and reaching undesirable and tolerance of other cultures and societies.

However, 71 percent of Asians believed that globalization could threaten local traditions and culture. The percentage of Filipinos who had similar beliefs was much lower at 62 percent.

"This openness to globalization may be due to the government's dissemination of information on its benefits," Nielsen said.

Concessions to Arab airlines worry PAL

By Abigail L. Ho

WHILE flag carrier Philippine Airlines Inc. is studying the possibility of flying to European countries, it has expressed reservation over how the government was granting more air traffic rights to Arab airlines possessing themselves to dominate the European market.

PAL president and chief executive officer Avelino Zapanta said in an interview that the airline was "still studying" the possibility as well as the viability of incoming flights to European countries, but possible concessions that the government might give to its most formidable competition remained a big consideration.

"We're still preliminary, but it's now more serious than before. We're still studying it. We also have to renegotiate air service agreements with European countries. But the problem here is that the market is now being raided by Arab airlines. Our government has the tendency to give more traffic rights to them," he told reporters.

He lamented that local policy-makers, particularly those negotiating with other countries for air traffic rights, usually gave in to the demands of their foreign counterparts for fear of losing certain non-aviation related rights and privileges.

In the case of Arab airlines, he said Philippine air panel members were quite willing to give more concessions to them because of the wealth of jobs that Arab nations offered Filipinos.

"Our decision-makers probably have an appreciation of the reality that Arab airlines are positioning themselves for the European market, but we will give traffic rights to them because we're afraid that they won't give jobs to Filipinos and they'll withdraw their investments. Foreign policy is often based on fear. We lose out (sing-li) as a nation," he said.

Arab airlines continue to be the world's most profitable, posting a growth of 20.5 percent year-on-year in terms of passenger volume, according to October statistics from the International Air Transport Association.

TO GO DOWN IN FIRST QUARTER

BSP sees banks' bad loan levels rising by yearend

By Clarissa S. Batino

BANKS' bad loan levels were expected to have deteriorated the last two months of the year but are expected to improve in the first quarter of 2004.

A forecast made by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas showed the bad loans ratio to the industry's loan portfolio level in the first quarter but only after deteriorating temporarily to as much as 16 percent of total loans in the last two months of the year.

Non-performing loans of the country's more than 40 commercial banks rose to 15.16 percent of total loans in October from 14.40 percent the previous month ago. The increase came as the level of soured loans swelled while credit slowed down as businesses held back expansion plans in light of political uncertainties.

In October, total loans contracted by 1 percent to P1,666.1 billion while bad loans went up by 1.3 percent to P252 billion.

A BSP source said the bad loans ratio in November was seen to go up between 15.3 and 16 percent as the level of NPLs was expected to be while lending would have remained anemic.

Growth in lending slowed down to 0.8 percent in October from close to four percent in previous months.

Bad loans or NPLs are accounts whose principal or interests are unpaid for 90 straight days.

But window-dressing among banks toward the end of the year would limit up the ratio to 15 percent by December, according to a BSP official.

By the first half of 2004, banks' loan quality would improve anew as lenders undertake a more aggressive strategy in restructuring bad loans, selling foreclosed assets or soured loans either by themselves or through an asset manager, said a BSP official.

Although banks' NPLs had declined from a peak of almost 19 percent almost two years ago, the central bank was still worried that lenders have not been taking full advantage of the Special Purpose Vehicle Act to reduce their bad loans and foreclosed assets.

The SPV law that provides tax incentives to NPL sales ones would expire after April 2005.

The BSP said some banks have been selling their assets individually. About P6.2 billion of these types of disposal had been approved by the Monetary Board.

In October 2002, NPLs stood at P200.89 billion, an amount that already reflected the removal of roughly P36 billion from the bad loans portfolio starting September 2002. The ratio had then been at 16.26 percent.

The BSP said banks have also been aggressively restructuring bad loans. Restructured loans reach P132 billion as restructure out of the NPL folder.

The level of real and other properties owned or acquired or Ropoa stood at P 993.9 billion as of October, up 0.4 percent from the previous month.

As a result, banks' non-performing assets or the combination of NPLs and Ropoa or seized assets stood at P446.9 billion, up one percent from P442.4 billion in September. The BSP ratio against total assets in October was higher at 13.42 percent from 13.25 percent.

Banks' NPL ratio peaked to 18.81 per cent in October 2001 from a single digit level before the 1997 Asian crisis. Since that time, banks have to contend with a growing portfolio of soured accounts.

Loan quality of banks worsened in year 2000 when NPLs soared hitting 11 percent and dropping to 16.26 percent later that year. Bad loans further deteriorated to 18 percent starting August 2001 although it had started to decline in June 2002.

The central bank is hopeful that banks, based agencies like the Asian Development Bank and the Inter-national Finance Corp. would help facilitate the sale of the banking sector's non-performing assets.

The ADB and the IFC are talking with asset management companies as well as banks to bridge the pricing gap that had dogged the sale of NPLs and seized assets.

The going rate for the special purpose vehicles is to ask banks to sell the bad loans and assets at a 70 to 80 percent discount. Banks, on the other hand, need taking losses, and so have been trying to sell the NPLs at a rate unwisely proportional to the offer of asset managers.

Neda's yearend briefing

LAST week, I attended the year-end briefing of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda). I usually do not go to government briefings, but I seldom miss Iam-drum-a-lore annual.

The invitation was for 11 a.m. and I was there about five minutes past. Of course, the briefing did not start on time, which is the main reason why I do not usually go to government briefings. Luckily, I found myself chatting with Nicole Cache of the Agencia EFE, the Spanish news agency. I had a great time exchanging notes with her on Spanish cuisine. I promised to try her recipes at her Manila's restaurant in Jupiter Street, Makati.

In time, a platoon of Neda executives ushered in its above-earlier, the buffet lunch started. I had soup, pasta, fish, beef and dessert. The food was fair but filling.

After lunch, Neda Secretary Romulo Neri opened the briefing. With the help of Power-Point, he rattled off data on the performance of the economy in 2003 and the prospects for 2004.

Although I love mathematics, I find data presented by economists totally boring. I was told that there would be the usual handout and I decided to wait for that. And since it was getting close to my siesta hour, I had a hard time staying awake.

The handout was full of alphabet soup: GDP, GNP, NFIA, APF, WEO and DPW. I had to dig to find out what some of these stood for. There were also tons of graphs. I wish these graphs could be prepared so as to be understood by non-economists like me without having to ask some economist to explain them to me.

One data I did easily understand was the drop in beverage manufacturing. When I had a chance to speak, I said the drop could be directly linked to my doctor who has restricted me to one bottle of beer a day.

The comparative graph on Asian GDP showed that, as of the third quarter of 2003, the Philippines grew by 4.4 percent. We did better than Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, South Korea and Singapore, but not so well as China, Thailand and Malaysia. The Insurance Commission used to compare premium growth rates of the Philippines with those of the rest of the Asian countries. This was stopped years ago because there was little basis for comparison. One does not compare a cargo truck, a freight train and a passenger jeepney.

The handout included a variation on Jimmy Capitalism. A Yale University scholar has written that boom capitalism exists when the state is "dominated by powerful business groups, which finance electoral campaigns and use politicians and the machinery of government to further their economic interests." This sounds like the Us. Remember the movie "Born Yesterday?" Broderick Crawford was the loathsome businessman who had a Senator in his pocket. Why do you think President Bush slapped a protective tariff on steel imported from Europe if he was not pressured by the steel industry? Do you think some of the US Senators, congressmen, governors are beholden to some business groups?

Why are there laws now on campaign finance and political contributions?

Boom capitalism is a kind of political lobbying. Washington is crowding with lobbyists, who are duly registered and licensed to practice their craft.

I am not trying to justify boom capitalism. But to make it appear that the phenomenon exists only in countries like the Philippines is outright.

Anyway, I had a good time at the Neda briefing. One of my New Year resolutions is to go to more government briefings. It is lunch to none.

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Mercedes C. Gonzalez

Flat growth for garments exports expected this year

By Michelle V. Rama

THE GARMENTS industry, the country's second-largest dollar earner, is expected to post zero growth this year, largely due to the slowdown of orders from the United States.

According to Dominic and Teddie Lopez Rosal (CTH) executive director Textile Mates, the industry is projected to generate $2.5 billion in export revenue for 2011, at the same as last year's level.

Adriano described the decline in garment exports to the United States as "artificial," saying the slowdown did not say much about the local industry's level of competitiveness but had more to do with the lower quota granted by Washington to Manila.

"By 2005, the quota will be lifted, so by then we will be able to see how the market will behave," said Adriano adding the quota-free regime that would begin in 2005 might benefit the local garments industry because it would result in limitless access to foreign markets.

The quota-free regime beginning 2005 means currently restrictions currently imposed in the biggest buyers of garments—the United States, the European Union and Canada—will be removed, paving the way for a free-for-all global market.

Adriano said the decline in garments shipment to the United States, which is the largest foreign market for the Philippines, might be about one to 2 percent. He said the full-year decline in orders from the United States would be brought by sluggish orders in the last three quarters of the year.

In the January to September period, shipments to the United States stood at $1.89 billion or slightly higher than the $1.86 billion posted during the same period in 2010.

Adriano said the expected growth in orders from non-quota countries and the European Union might only be enough to offset the decline in orders from the United States, and not to result in overall growth.

In 2010, orders from the United States accounted for about 75 percent of the country's total garments export revenue.

Garments shipment to the European Union generated $289 million in the first nine months of the year, or higher than the $240 million recorded in the same period in 2010.

Common economic agenda

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

AS THE PRESIDENTIAL candidates unveil their respective economic platforms in the coming weeks, we are likely to see more similarities than differences among them. After all, anyone can see what our country's most pressing economic problems are. Besides, we can expect every serious candidate to choose economic advice from largely the same small pool of highly trained professional economists in the country (unlike lawyers, there really aren't all that many of us, believe it or not!). He or she can also be expected to draw the advice of formally trained economists in favor of time-bred economic analysts with unorthodox ideas, and pseudo-economists long in ideological rhetoric but short in theory (of brain, we do not have a shortage!). Doing so would only count a negative for Gloria II on the investment community and jeopardize our economic stability—as some recently elected Latin American leaders with initially left-leaning tendencies quickly learned.

Jobs, prices and income

The ordinary citizen cares little about economic programs issued on the usual numbers on GNP/GDP, fiscal deficits, balance of payments and other quantitative macroeconomic indicators. To gain support, each candidate must be able to address the three socio-economic indicators that feel every Filipino mouth, especially the many and the much who will determine the coming election's outcomes. These are jobs, prices and income.

Our current track record on these is mixed, but the incumbent President can take credit for the fact that under her watch, we are doing reasonably well on four out of the three, at least based on the official economic data. The latest inflation rate (averaging only around 3 percent for the last two years, the country had not seen better price stability in at least the past 12 years. Growth in overall output and income as measured by GNP/GDP has also been quite respectable, although there is need to broaden the base of such growth.

But with more than one out of every 10 workers unable to find work, job creation remains the single biggest challenge in our economic management. The lack of jobs dooms Filipino families to persistently high rates of poverty. If it's any consolation, the problem is not unique to the Philippines. Even rich industrialized countries are having a similar problem with "jobless growth." For some time now, high rates of joblessness have also been plaguing the USA, Japan, and most of Europe.

Growth with jobs

It is therefore incumbent on each presidential candidate to spell out how she/he proposes to achieve broad-based economic growth that will translate into an expansion of domestic jobs and reduction of chronic poverty. On this, there is wide agreement on some key strategies that need to be undertaken.

For example, aside from the inexplicable urban nationalism among us, few will dispute that we need to attract more of those foreign investments pouring into one part of the world, but going mostly to Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and China. For as long as our domestic savings rate remains as low as it has traditionally been relative to our neighbors, much of the job-creating investments we need will have to be financed from foreign savings. There is no escaping this fundamental postulate in economics. Thus, every presidential candidate will try to convince us that his/her government will be able to overcome the persistent disincentives to foreign investments in our country: inferior infrastructure, high rates of criminality, graft and corruption, lack of predictability and flexibility in economic policies and contracts, and so on. No amount of fiscal incentives will attract enough investments in our economy unless these more fundamental issues are firmly and deliberately addressed.

Another key element in pursuing a broad-based economic growth that most Filipinos consistently say presidential hopefuls must platform is the promotion and strengthening of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). For one thing, the capital needed to create one job in SMEs is significantly smaller than in large-scale enterprises. SMEs also permit a much broader distribution of economic activity, both geographically and sectorally. And such a strong program for rural SME development, since savings can be mobilized right within the countryside, rather than have them siphoned off to the urban centers to finance mostly large enterprises. This way, more jobs can be generated in the countryside where unemployment, underemployment and poverty are more prevalent.

Other imperatives

Every candidate will emphasize the primacy of education in providing for our nation's future economic thrust. Everybody knows that the number of school rooms, teachers and textbooks remain unable to catch up with the rapid growth in the number of school-age Filipino children year after year. There is also wide agreement on the need to upgrade the quality of education in the Philippines, which has recently fallen behind that of our neighbor as evidenced by comparative test scores and other objective indicators. The country's future will be shaped by how well our educational system shapes the next generation of our citizens and leaders, and the relevant urgency of addressing our current shortcomings in education should be clear to any aspiring leader of the land.

Like much else, the problem with education and all other essential public services is one of the weak finances of the Philippine government. All candidates will therefore indicate how they will ensure that government revenues can be substantially increased in order to arrest the decline in current and revenue effort ratios (i.e. ratio to GNP) since 1997. This will be one of the most urgent and challenging balancing acts the next President will have to demonstrate success in within her/his first year in office. Much of everything else will fall into place once this is accomplished.

Comments to cielito.habito@gmail.com

BUSINESS

PLDT sets aside ₱18B for expenditures in '04

By Abigail L. Ho

[illegible] carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. is coming under [illegible] P18 billion [illegible] expenditures next year, the bulk of which will go to the expansion of cellular subsidiary Smart Communications Inc.

PLDT president and chief executive Manuel Pangilinan said Smart would have a budget of around P11 billion, roughly the same amount earmarked for 2003.

As of the third quarter of the year, Smart had already spent P6.9 billion of its programmed expenditures. He said the cellular giant would likely cap the year with a total spending of between P9 billion and P10 billion.

The P9 billion to P10 billion Smart, he said, would represent 20 percent of the firm's total capex [illegible] revenues, which will likely hit between P47 billion and P48 billion by year's end.

With revenues expected to further increase in 2004, Pangilinan said expenditures as a percentage of revenues for Smart would either be flat or below 20 percent in 2004. Even if next year's budget would be slightly higher than the actual amount spent this year.

Smart, still the country's biggest cellular service provider, both in terms of subscriber base and number of cell sites, will continue rolling out network infrastructure in areas still not covered by its more than 1,400 cell sites scattered all over the country.

In an earlier interview, Smart president and chief executive Napoleon Nazareno said the company would be focusing its network expansion efforts on areas outside Metro Manila where the penetration rate was not even nearly as big as in the urban area.

For PLDT's fixed line business, Pangilinan said the group would be picking up its capital expenditure allocation to P7 billion from between P5 billion and P6 billion this year.

As of the first nine months of 2003, PLDT fixed line had spent a little less than P3.9 billion of its full-year budget. He said fixed line would likely end up spending between P5.7 billion and P6.8 billion by end-2003.

This capex would be below P6 billion, about P5.7 billion to P5.8 billion for this year. Our sales would be P46 billion, so capex would roughly be about 12 percent of revenues in 2003," he said.

The increase in allocated capex for fixed line and [illegible] with PLDT's efforts to enhance its data infrastructure, particularly those being used in its Internet business.

"Our fixed line capex will rise to about P7 billion because we're going to have a rapid build-out of principally our DSL (digital subscriber line). We will be living up more fiber optic cables to widen the pipes and increase the speed we can use data because more and more people of the increased data usage of Internet," he said.

PLDT is concentrating on building the subscriber base of its [illegible] service, Digitel expects increased access as well as to shed up time-service, Vibe.

Of the P7 billion to be needed for next year's capex, 50 percent would be spent for network maintenance while the remaining 50 percent would be used for network expansion.

NTC to bid out ₱102M worth of substations

By Russell W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL Transmission Corp. is bidding out contracts to build P102 million worth of substations and is buying P50 million worth of power line service vehicles to kick off next year's efforts to upgrade and maintain the national transmission grid.

In letters to contractors, Transco's bids and awards committee chair Wilfredo Dagdiwan said 4/138-kilovolt and 69-kV equipment were needed for a new substation in Mexico, Camarines Sur.

The Mexico contract has a budget of P35.69 million and should be completed within 180 days. Works include site development and building of control house, switchyard, pumphouse and putting up the transmission line.

Also, Dagdiwan said 138-kV equipment were needed for the Bolinao substation in Luzon.

The Bolinao project, which is under the Luzon Grid Intervention reinforcement program, has a price ceiling of P28.41 million and should be done in 300 days.

The official advised interested contractors to submit their applications for eligibility not later than Jan. 12, but he did not say what the deadline for submission of the bids were.

In a third notice, Dagdiwan invited suppliers to offer bids for the provision of 44 brand new transportation and power line maintenance vehicles.

Bidding will be held for two batches, with the first covering 14 trucks under a budget of P42.25 million and the second covering 30 pickups for a price cap of P26.75 million.

The deadline for submission of eligibility requirements was set on Jan. 15.

Under Transco's Mindanao transmission augmentation program or Project White, the company is raising some ₱2.1 billion worth of projects aimed to address the overloading of selected power transformer units and improve the reliability of service in Mindanao's [illegible] area.

Witness documents showed that the projects would modernize and add capacity to existing substations, expand 69-kilovolt transmission lines and increase load capacity on existing ones.

Further, Transco had identified some P4.7 billion worth of projects that would support several steel mini-island connection works, worth P13.2 billion, all meant to improve the Visayas power grid in the next five years.

Corn output to go up by 6 percent

By Christine R. Gaylican

THE COUNTRY'S corn production will improve by at least 6 percent between January and March 2004 as farmers are expected to increase area harvested in anticipation of firmer selling prices and good weather, Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr. said.

"Corn prices will remain attractive and the [illegible] to be generally favorable. We expect production areas to expand even more and the result will be a better harvest next year," said Lorenzo in a letter sent Friday.

Based on planting intentions recorded in October, corn output will likely rise 6 percent to 1.416 million metric tons in the first quarter of 2004 from last year's 1.34-million-MT figure. The increased production is key growing areas in Mindanao and Cagayan Valley, Bureau of Agriculture Statistics data indicated.

Lorenzo added that the 6 percent is still the low-end of the target and "a higher growth formula for the corn sector could even be higher."

"With farm gate prices remaining firm in recent months—fetching a high of ₱9 per kilo for yellow corn in mid-October and hovering at ₱7.19 per kilo as of Dec. 19 from an average of ₱6.47 posted during the same period last year—many farmers would want to cultivate the crop," said Lorenzo.

[illegible] 2003 corn production [illegible] 6.3 percent to 4.2 million MT from 3.95 million MT in 2002. Area harvested [illegible] 2.7 million hectares from 2.6 million hectares.

Arts & Design LIFESTYLE

Editor Chris Batoil Formoso
Lifestyle Editor Lito Zulueta

A MONUMENT to the town plaza's namesake Baptist Church of Boac's four-year stride in their city

WIDE passages built centuries ago from thick-cut tropical hardwood are a prime reminder that even along the outermost façades of the Last convents in Bantay Island.

VENTANILLAS with heavily carved balconies are seen beneath windows still glazed with colored glass from the 19th century.

In 2004, wake up to the splendor of the Philippines

How wonderful it would be if the New Year would rouse Filipinos up so they could appreciate the natural and cultural splendor that surrounds them.

We have so much beauty around us that we take for granted. The coming 2004 would be a good time to discover the Philippines, to get to know our country beyond the "What" Philippines" reports tidbits.

Go in-depth, get to know for yourself what the country and its landscape are really like, so as to develop above all a strong feel for the culture and the people. There are many cultural places in our islands.

The imprint of continental heroism is on Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte. Although he departed from his Dapitan exile over a century ago, the presence of Rizal remains in Dapitan. He made an impact on farmland both around the Dakonsod-ah-ah brae the Gaw Bayhouse, an octagonal nipa house in his seaside retreat where he once lived, relics he gave the Rizal Shrine. He designed an irrigation and water distribution system that became the basis of the present city water system. He installed a relief map of Mindanao that still remains in the town plaza. Dapitan is a unique location nowhere in the Philippines is there such a strong presence of a national hero.

Visible from the Dapitan coast is Bohol, an island rich in heritage. Its coastline is strung with a necklace of magnificent Spanish colonial churches that remain as reminiscences of swift power and treasure whose ancestral buildings and private houses date back more than centuries ago. The province has become one of the country's tourism success stories. Local communities receives the tourism program, recognizing that there were cultural and material heritage contributes deeply as one of the most unique locations in the Philippines.

Largest convento

Off Batangas in Negros Oriental is small Siquijor Island, a hardly outpost that boasts of a magnificent Spanish colonial church beside the largest convento in the country. Built of tropical hardwood that has aged through the centuries, the imposing convento is the focus of the island.

Not many Cebuanos know that their province offers more than its well-known beach resorts. A drive south to Carcar reveals a relatively unknown 19th century town with a number of mixed Cebuano-style baloy in hardwood delicately carved. Another surround a plaza with a magnificent church. Further down the road is a series of splendid heritage churches that stand facing the sea in silent guard against Muslim invaders who staged periodic raids on the island. Churches were large enough to shelter an entire town that would take refuge within their doors as soon as belfry from lookout towers to signal an invasion. Churches and cemeteries punctuate the effervescent landscape of mountains and sea.

Iloilo City stands as testament to another historic era. Ornate commercial edifices, most of them deteriorating, survive in the city streets as quiet reminder of its golden days as the "Queen City of the South." Designed in a cosmopolitan architectural styles, mansions of sugar barons continue to stand as proudly as ever, defying all signals that their time has become an today's energetic s short drive from the city is Miag-ao Church with a richly-carved exuberant façade, a real feast Christopher dressed in Filipino farmer's clothes and surrounded by lucky sugar

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

tities.

Patrician

Patrician Jaro in Negros Occidental once ruled itself the "Paris of the South." In the early 20th century sugar boomed. Profits from raw sugar became built investments for the planters whose lifestyles were as grand as their houses. Life was good. There were operas, grand balls and banquets for entertainment.

Behind the big houses of landlords, houses of farm workers, the often-neglected backbone of sugar plantations, show the Visayan love of architectural services. Edible nipa styles follow local variations in the Philippines, the Western Visayan version of the bahay kubo mixes bamboo in lace-like patterns to form delicate walls, window coverings, and doors. There are tropical borders that contain life.

There is so much variety of natural and natural heritage as are the natural part of the Philippine archipelago that illustrates the lifestyle peculiar to that region of the country. The entire heritage ensembles that are the province—culture, language, song, dance and crafts.

Aside from our national heritage, each place in the country has its own unique heritage that sets it apart which gives the Philippines a special brilliance.

"There is much in the Philippines that evokes a strong pride of place. Nothing those places expands horizons.

Another alternative is to expand your horizons overseas. The Four Kingdoms World Heritage Tour touches Bali's Borobudur area to Asia the temples of Sukhothai in Thailand. The old world city of Luang Prabang in Laos, the former imperial capital of Hue in Vietnam, the controversial metropolis of Mui Ne in Malaysia, and the ancient temples of Angkor in Cambodia. Information and bookings for departures that begin in January are available at Host Travel. Call 5560065/5050606 loc.

E-mail your comments and feedback to gfvill-lalon@hotmail.com

"WITHIN/Without," by Jaypee Ramos (drawing, honorary)

"STATION of Humanity for Future and Society," by Darwin Coronel (mixed media, second prize)

"DISCERNIBLE Discourse," by Godofredo Zapanta (cardboard relief, first prize)

"MIDNIGHT Adventure," by Neil Manaloay (painting, second prize)

"GLASS," by Maria Cristina Valmores (sculpture, first prize)

DESPITE CRISIS OF VISION

AAP animates art

By Gina Quemada
Contributor

THE 2001 list the seven categories of this year's Art Association of the Philippines (AAP) Annual Juried Competition (AAP) Annual Juried Competition took of fantastic works stacked up along the walls of the GSIS Museo ng Sining, the thing which had something significant or motivations to say or show by way of subject and form—and ultimately choosing the pieces that truly mattered in this anything-goes-in-the-name-of-art picketing.

So much said for quantity which, I guess had exceeded the organizer's expectations, as art entrants lately because the shortlist ready to enter and forums (for this year's limited, the cash bonanza was generously provided by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts; the first prize was increased to P50,000, and along with its many thunderous metal sculptures by Bad Immigrant).

As to the quality of the entries, this year's AAP Annual had its exhilarating share of the usual hype, the predictable failures and the heavy clichés that had dominated past exhibitions.

The sculpture entries were mostly the least inspired and disappointing in the entire showcase. Mixed media, in majority of them literally fell flat on the stone floor, solidified down by their rather minuscule size and limited format.

Even the mixed media category that proved a real delight, visually and technically, about this suffering tag-ale of homogenous format vary and in the way of most of the pieces.

Gone with dreaming, which ignited a lively debate between the sculptures of realism and abstraction.

Uncover

The winners in the painting category were no surprises for. First prize-winner Alexandre Bonus' "Target Main Target" encapsulates the roots of violence by the injection of irony with a mock and bedding adult a toy gun, while the icon of the United Heart Flowers throw the veil.

Second-prize winner Bob Penaojar Bandalong's "Midnight Adventure" is a rapture in finely wrought watercolor, a finely etched tour de force in iconic emblems, with visions reminiscent of Art Deco generously splashed over it.

I couldn't make much sense of Rommel Estrada's third prize-winning "Blue Eye," which shows a more pronouncing meddling with the use of broken figures, a piece which could have been more aptly entered in rendering instead of the well-delineated facial features of the victim.

Succession reared its ugly head in other paintings, such as Hernan Sanvicente's room treatment of dreaming poverty in a vineyard in "Living Idols, Flying Blueprints"; Arthur Toledo's "Nidalang Ilan Kamawanan," which shows a bride floating, its entire front ripped apart to show the disembowelment, and Mad Magazine's "Brazier on Remembrance," with its figure hideously entrapped in a diaphanous plastic sheet, a metaphor of the dire straits Filipinos find themselves in.

All three winners in mixed media drive into the aging religious taboos that has derailed our people today with a host of quasi-awkward, gross issues closely related to.

First-prize winner Godofredo Zapanta Jr.'s "Discernible Discourse," parodies the icon by Geronimo (Spanish medium, with a glass-encased of Christ on the Cross powerfully split into two and a coat poker-chip king-cut for tongue in the ultimate act of mockery).

Jhanvie Gamonin's runner-up "Station of Humanity for Future and Society" shows a transitional leaning, the fit of society and comes complete with scratched junk and scrap-tin appurtenances.

Tom Cruz' "Submission" shows a delicious image of Christ bowering above a grid of images carved from candle and bearing unfathomable allure, real and fresh here.

Rose-Ellie mention winner Noel Rosa Jr.'s "Cybernetics," in oil, acquire rust and found objects, bears a huge mask, with eyes closed, open to show the high-tech mechanisms that it strikes for hard-to-grasp.

Wilson Bautista's "Nature's Gift" rewards the main concept of Jun Philip Wenzo-winning previous as much smaller and has severe scale.

I found Ed Ivarra' "Pangalo-galang Pangalo Boyan ca Sina Hukayan" as the most provocative of the lot to in pursuit of two-page-presentation of kids posing pointedly at the viewer, framed by political slogans culled from 20 years of the Pinoy's failed-belt-tenance.

In sculpture, Ms. Caroline Medina's "Dilog," the first prize winner, is disarmingly simple (though sorely lacking in innovation compared to the humongous up). What it struggles to be in power it might realize up for in its exploration of medium—a thin cutting cleverly manipulated and reconfigured like a strange textured inventory crawling across the floor.

Aaron Rojas's "Barbie and Kidnap," the first runner-up, is a decidedly more playful piece (only rather in its use of medium mixed, wood and found bits).

The third-prize winner, "Shedding of Innocence," a bronze sculpture by Earl Rampan, shows the bust of a woman on a pedestal with a pedestal on a raised wood bed, translucent and surrealist.

The other sculptural works are half-realized renderings, either predecessor-overdone or grossly underfilled.

Drawing and photography

The drawing category's best entry, Jaypee Ramos's "With Patience" (in charcoal), shows a room in total disarray, leaving the clutter and chaos of his bed-daily existence, from the point of view splattered on the floor to the antique cabinet in front, open to further reveal the dweller's annoyance. Besides still, we see a lotus figure by the window interpreting the assorted materials.

Isaah Bravo's "Cursed" (pastel on paper) is a largely abstract piece, with its pictorial fold supplied in a lively dialog between horizontal and vertical lines.

Pastor Ignacio Rodriguez' "Sukbayan" has Charlie Co-like bloodfolded characters in multi-leveled realism capped by a landscape of mound of plastics, bizarre into post-apocalyptic nightmare.

Warren Rabaan's "Neighboring Reports" shows a circular tableau of footwear in formidable quantity that perplexes the eye.

Photography's best entry, "Recent Ancient," is a blessing to the less talented artist who is unnecessarily killed himself in a rage of supreme weakness. This impression made by Pacquali Mac Dimaguiba combines elements of performance art, painting, production design and of course photography in an attempt to re-configure Pac-Graphic self-portrait.

Honorable mention winner Mel Mesina-Cruz's "The End," is no-frilled film on silver gelatin, which has a surreal quality to it, showing two ghost-like female figures occupying the bike on a muddy road.

Ildefonso Lacuesta's "Pillars" reanimates the pillars of the old Bel-Air church, capturing the time-born on but solid no-core edifice.

Digital art enabled a slew of experimental works, thanks to the magic of digital photoshop technology but Dennis Magdaraog's "Pagmamahal" easily stands out by virtue of its technical subject—flower-bearing. Rabadi-like women—bewildered by a Philippine day until, as yet, less matured talent as heralds the same floral adornments.

Finally, the Leo Rosero-turned-fire art entries, which seemed lost in the Gray Art Free volume, with the prize going to Melissa B. Magsipoc's piece, "Add Windows OS: mixed Installation of Artistic Heterogeneity and a Deluge of Stylish Appropriations." Following the format of Microsoft Word, from start to directory, the mixed medium piece is a multi-layered history and prospects in the Self Annual, the concerns of the art community and the nagging problems that confront artists amid globalization.

In Yang's critique, and in the multimedium art entries, there are the underlying questions of identity, ethnicity and making art relate to the experiences of seeing and being in the world.

E-mail author at gala-manalo@yahoo.com

"MUSEO Ego," by Rosemarie A. Fajardo (painting, third prize)

"DANIELA"

Modern-dress odalisques

By Constantine C. Tejero

THE NUDE in Philippine art, like the still life, is usually rendered as a mere study, in this case, of the human anatomy.

Most Filipino artists shun short scene to be interested in recreating it like the satisfying mini-square and mega-decades of Baroque art. Both a new exception (Del Rosal Artist Conference Takeuchi's "Odaliscos"), a Filipino is a major subject that's still in illustrations of our common needs within conditions of Malolos and Magnolia's.

Such should not be the case, because the human nude is one of the loveliest sights the human eye can behold. And the human (anatomy) is one of the most complex forms the human mind can imagine.

The nudes of Ephrem Jamon, in lavish display through December in The Crucible Gallery at Intramuros, 4-L Bldg A, SM Megamall, show this complexity and loveliness.

Some very elusive these pieces are. Of almost-pre-nudes of nudes, but they're actually something. But it, Somnolo's art actually manifests the basic. The women's nakedness is never (unexpected), but is, in fact, enhanced by the use of contrasting of light and shade, while character manifests in the physical contortions.

Other Eubio has four portraits in oil pastel. In two, she's lounging, one is lounging nude in the nine Saturday look, the half-profile of her breasts body on against white pillow, clam-gaze and brown.

In the third, in slow, aqueous tone, brown and gray, she falls back with unrelated nude, female apartment, as if offering her assets to the viewer.

The fourth is a study in free-dreaming, where she's long and yellow, brown and gray. The whole portrait has a lovely golden glow.

Sheila Bermoni is rendered in charcoal, depicting her breathing on a gray monochrome, her face turned away.

Daniela has four portraits showing her standing, hunched over, or crossing her legs with her hands on her knees, while looking straight at the viewer. The figure is rendered in charcoal, with the gray mono-tonne highlighted by brownish tinge of pastel.

Nelly Lim has two portraits. One is the classic odalisque on cushioned fabric. The other is a provocative pose, with the lady on all fours on the bed, eyes closed, face on the mattress, buttocks up.

After considering in the terms of the technique used in Somnolo's portraits. Now the figure is a favorite monochrome in pastel with a greenish tinge of charcoal.

Angelo Valet has two portraits. One is a back view in pastel and charcoal, also of gray and brown.

Arguably the exhibit's lovelies is Angelo's golden nude in watercolor on paper. It is a fine and pure rendition of the strength of woman.

He stands by a bed of green, with his two pillows and yellow sheet, one hand resting on the backrest of a checked dark draped with lacy sheer fabric. It is a pure reality of the Renaissance.

A graduate of the University of Santo Tomas's College of Fine Arts, Somnolo is known for his hyperrealism (as in his watercolor rendition of Angelo Valet's). He used to illustrate comic strips to support his studies, and switched to a classic mind artist after graduation.

He is now based in San Francisco, California and would only occasionally paint our goddesses, and in some elements of this exhibit might say, bihar grace!

Yearend exhibit features Mother and Child works

WORKS by Ang Kimkok, Mario Parial, Lydia Velasco, Norma Belleza and Angelito Antonio are featured in the "Madonnas and Child Yuletide" exhibit at Galerie Joaquin. The show runs until Jan. 10, 2004.

Also featured are works by the gallery's in-house artists such as Bonnie Rubio, Silvino Tres Reyes, Bernard Viana, Amalia Queano and Richard Armado.

The big Kimkok is a 1999 1.0" x 22" work in a red-orange background.

The works of Parial are three 24" x 18" gems done in oil on canvas. "Madonna and Child of the Fields" is accompanied with gold leaf paint as part of the embroidery of the dress of the Madonna.

"Mother and Child of the Sunflowers" has the Madonna's shawl wrapped in a blanket as the child. Meanwhile, "Pearl" is a lovely work for the Yuletide.

Velasco's are three 30" x 24" works titled "Mother and Child with Cat," "Mother Having Child" and "Two Mothers with Their Child."

In "Mother and Child at Sunrise," Antonio is true to his cubist influences. It shows a mother carrying a child wrapped in a green blanket (still evidently effaced) depicted in multiple perspectives. The other includes a charcoal, foil iron, bricks, orchids, a shrud and a wooden hand puppet.

"Mother and Child of the Home" has a seated mother and child amid fruits, vegetables, fish, a kitchen knife and a religious symbol—appearances of important objects that preoccupy a mother in a home.

Rubio's are 20" x 20" works titled "Ang Pamilya," "Mother with her Two Children" and "Mother and Child of the Tribe."

Tres Reyes is represented by a 30" x 24" "Madonna and Child of the Woodlands" and a 40" x 28" "Garden Madonna."

Bernard Viana presents a contemporary strategy on the age-old theme. Richard Armado has several colorful works in cubist style.

"MOTHER and Child at Sunrise," by Angelito Antonio

The Mother and Child theme has cut across civilizations and historical eras, ranging from Mycenaean and Athenian urns to stone carvings in Central America. With the coming of Christianity, the theme became a homage to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus.

Galerie Joaquin is located at 171 corner F. Gonzaga St. and Wilson cor. Little Arthurs Mills, San Juan. Call 7219203 or 723 9319.

"MADONNA and Child of the Fields," by Mario Parial

"MADONNA of Woodlands," by Silvino Tres Reyes

DEAN Jaime de los Santos (standing, fourth from left) of the College of Fine Arts and Design of the University of Santo Tomas was the guest of honor at the opening of the show "Art in Motion" by the Grupong Ibolan.

'Art in Motion' in Intramuros

GALLERIA de los Santos presents "Art in Motion" at 2/L, Solidez Center, 744 Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila. On exhibit are 46 works using different styles and media. Participating artists are Aaron Abella, Bella Borgos, Chissy Carpio, Eduardo de la Cruz, Herman del Rosario, Noel Estallanes, Angelo Paolo Estallanes, Bodie Fuentes, Tina Gramajo Mercado, Marylou Jose Agustin-Mayo, Rosey Salas and Tess Tumolva.

Call 527 2115.

"CAT and Kittens," by Bayani Rey Acuin

"KUNDIMAN," by Bernardo Viana

"MOTHER and Child at Lake Sebu," by Dionisio Rubio

History in pictures

MANILA burning? Pandacan oil depot goes up in flames after the Japanese bombing in 1941.

A Cavite museum's photo collection is a grim reminder of the 'ungodly years'

MODEL of American warship

By Jaroona Aning
Contributor
Photos by Rudy Espino

"COLUMNS of black, oily smoke rose thousands of feet into the sky, blocking out the morning sun and creating an apocalyptic backdrop for the last hours of American Manila."

Historians Richard Connaughton, John Pimlott and Duncan Anderson, in their book "The Battle for Manila" (1995), conveyed in words how American engineers blew up the fuel storage depots in Pandacan as the Japanese started to overrun all the Philippines during the World War II.

The entire scene also captured in a photograph at the Gerardino Berenguer de los Reyes Jr. (GBR) Foundation Museum in General Trias, Cavite.

This and about 170 more photos showing the outbreak of the World War II in the Philippines, the three-year Japanese Occupation and the Allied Liberation in 1944-45 are perhaps the most troubling and awe-inspiring in the GBR collection.

The pictures are part of a big collection that depicts natural and historical scenes from the 16th-century Spanish colonial times to the Fifth Republic. Tycoon De los Reyes placed the collection in a museum at Ark Gateway Business Park, an industrial zone at the heart of General Trias town.

Horror of war

Depicted are an assortment of scenes...destroyed landmarks; corpses of civilians killed in air raids and skirmishes; mass evacuations; victorious Japanese troops; defeated Gaelic soldiers; guerrillas; wartime political events and even actual battles on land, sea and air.

Included in the collection are framed front pages of local and foreign newspapers that documenting events from the outbreak of the war to the fall of the Japanese-occupied Philippines.

Jaime Hidalgo, Gateway's chief executive officer who sometimes act as unofficial museum tour guide, said his friend Dr. los Reyes was only 9 years old when war broke out. Dr. los Reyes then lived with his family on General Luna Street near the Supreme Court building in Manila's Ermita district.

The family moved to the highlands of Benguet, Ifugao, and remained there until Liberation. The young Dr. los Reyes, Hidalgo revealed, was enthralled by dogfights between Japanese and American planes that he could see from the Benguet-an church belfry. He developed an interest in planes as had an entire section at the Museum devoted to wartime and commercial aviation history.

Buying an inheritance

In the early 1990s, in a studio in San Francisco, California whose owner had just died, Dr. los Reyes saw old photos of the Philippines. He decided to buy them from the owner's heir.

Dr. los Reyes' photo collection also received contributions from the Macarthur Foundation, Ramon Namnicken, Carlos P. Romulo Foundation and the Victor Pryor Collection, most of which were taken by photojournalist Romeo Ving.

Dr. los Reyes bought small-scale models of World War II planes that he watched as a boy that became part of his growing collection.

The businessman also commissioned large paintings of the Leyte Landing and the Battle of Leyte Gulf from Stan Stokes, who worked for the Smithsonian museum.

The LAAirwave GBR Museum was opened in 1995. Four of the pavilions contain the photos exhibits while the fifth houses the model planes.

The Philippines, an American Commonwealth waiting for independence promised in 1946, got embroiled in World War II on Dec. 8, about four hours after the Japanese's sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

By Dec. 23, the Japanese were driving American and Filipino forces southward.

Tactical retreat

Gaelic commander in chief Gen. Douglas Macarthur put his so-called War Plan Orange 3 into effect. The plan called for the tactical withdrawal of all defending forces in Luzon to concentrate on the Bataan peninsula, where they were to wait for aid from the US.

Dec. 25, 1941, Christmas Day, was perhaps one of the bloodiest in Philippine history. There was no cheer, none, no singing of carols and no exchanging of gifts.

On Dec. 26, Macarthur declared Manila and its suburbs "open city."

Despite the declaration, the bombing of Manila continued.

On Dec. 30 President Franklin Roosevelt sent a message to the Filipino people praising their gallant resistance against the Japanese invaders and promising liberation.

Quezon and his vice president, Sergio Osmeña, started their new terms of office inside a tunnel in Corregidor on the same day.

Fall of Bataan, Corregidor

Quezon left Corregidor on Feb. 20, the following year and would reach the US on May 6. MacArthur left the island on March 11, Bataan surrendered on April 9, followed by Corregidor on May 6.

Carlos P. Romulo, then a colonel attached to the war information headquarters, recalled in his book "I Saw Philippines Fall" (1942), Manila's deserted boulevards, night clubs and hotels that looked like funeral parlors, the Manila Bay modern ships were sticking out like tombstones.

He saw looters roaming the streets, the ill-armed police abandoning all attempts to maintain peace and order in the metropolis, the Pandacan depots still spewed spectacular fireballs into the night sky, while directly south the Port Area was ablaze.

At the lobby of the Manila Hotel, he recalled, a band played while elegantly dressed couples, mostly Americans and British, did a slow dance. It was the final night of brave but Manila.

The first Japanese troops entered the southern outskirts of Manila on Jan. 2, 1942; the Japanese military administration was proclaimed the same day. Then followed three years dubbed as the "Ungodly Years."

SCREAMING HEADLINE. Worst fear comes true.

THE GERARDINO Berenguer de los Reyes Jr. Foundation Museum has an instructive section on World War II armor.

LIFESTYLE

Best performances of 2003

(CD) Shamcey as Beauty, with the Beast and the Enchanted Rose

By Aracelli Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

IT WAS a year rich in music, and highlighted by festivals: Sangguniang 2003, the Philippine Heritage Festival, Philippine International Choral Festival and the San Agustin International Music Festival.

Like the Filipino Heritage Festival, Sangguniang 2003, a festival of cultural celebration by Herbert G. Tiongson, was an interesting melange of the arts, (but is, the Seven Lively Arts (including film). It celebrated Filipino creativity and ingenuity under the impact of North American influence.

The San Agustin music fest showcased a contemporary Tanga Mass composed by various choirs and the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO). One of the instrumental classics in the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), each number was a treat, as the choirs outdid themselves in showmanship.

The eight participating choirs were Chorale Inner Resonance of Australia, Earth Choir of Taiwan, Aurea Child Choir of Iceland, Filipino Mission Choir of South Korea, Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music Chorale, San Beda College Chorale, University of San Agustin Troubadours and the University of Santo Tomas Singers. They were complemented by the Philippine Madrigal Singers and Ateneo Singvoice Chorale.

At the Far Eastern University the President's Commander on Culture presented "A Kaleidoscope of Songs (A Quest for Peace)," National Artist for Music Lucrecia Kasilag, veteran musical and, of course, remaining her dignity toward the audience with a cup number on the ill effects of garlic ("Bawal i...").

Down but not culture-stricken) cast actor in "Lagi Dong Mamalasha," a surprise musical tribute to various National Artists, directed by Chris Millado and arranged by the CCP Composer Chino Toledo and the PPO.

Lead bravura

At the Phil Am Life Auditorium, pianist Gerald Lival performed with her music bravura early this year by conductor Redel Dalagan of the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra. During the press conference which preceded the concert, colleague Ruben Lobregat wondered aloud why Lival was not yet a National Artist.

The pianist merely raised her eyebrows, shrugged her shoulders and declared, tongue in cheek: "They can give me the award when I'm gone!" Later she went on an outreach tour of the North, got caught in a snowstorm, and nearly missed her flight back to the US.

"The Set," a musical offering at the CCP Main Theater featuring violinist Jenny Swarts, 13, proved a rewarding night for all those who had nurtured and promoted her exceptional talent, among them conductor Arturo Molina of the Manila Symphony Orchestra II, H. Nicholas Lo's College and Rod Rodrigo of DZFE's "Bravo Filipino."

Well, well, what have we here, another musical superstar in the making: Lival with the piano, and young Swarts with the violin.

The Philippine Madrigal Singers celebrated their 40th anniversary with an offering which, on its third founder, National Artist for Music Andrea O. Veneracion, had the evening was made even more memorable by the participation of an many soprano direct that Veneracion helped to name.

Soprano Margarita Fule Gomez turned in a notable performance during her Filipino Arias Series, revival at the CCP's Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino (Little Theater). Superstar ranged from heavy and authoritive to light and flirty with correct intonation in several languages.

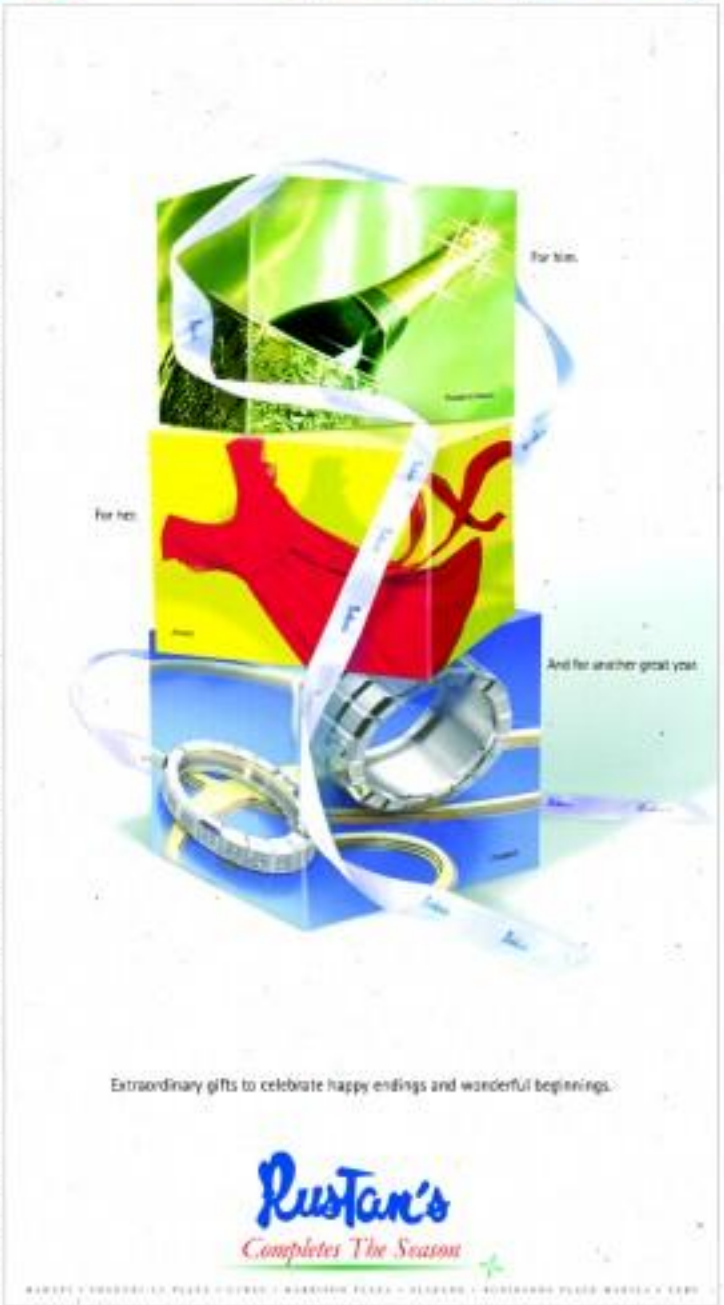
Tanghalang Pilipino had a winner with "Women the Musicals," starring Mia Bautista in the vignettes, written by Ricky Lee, composed by Vincent A. de Jesus, and directed by Tony Tuparlo. Separate performances are needed for 2004 and hopefully in a bigger venue, namely, the CCP Little Theater.

Play of the year

Another (at least long-running) musical was Repertory Philippines' "Beauty and the Beast" at Onstage, with the fast-moving, multi-talented Liza Dantes leading the cast as Beauty. For 2004, the Globe Theater at Onstage will be the home for Rep productions.

The recent musical "Closeness," directed by Bobby of Alfredo Escalaros, was a story, sophisticated and tongue-in-cheek, parable about dictatorship, corruption, revolution and (possible) counter-revolution. It was entertainment with a bite, with many parallels to the Philippine situation.

The early 2004, Atlantis, to celebrate its fifth anniversary, will stage the classic "Man Sick Story."



CLOSE encounter with Rodel Colmenar of the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra

A STIRRING scene from Dekang Sibol's "Kalantas ng Kwer"

JUNIOR SUCCESS, an impressive talent

Best performances of 2003

From page A3

The play of the year was "The Romance of Magno Rubio," as staged by the metamedium talents of Mayo Theater Company, a fill-fast group based in the US.

Written by Lennie Cester (with Tagalog text by Ralph Peña), the play was based on a story by Carlos Bulosan, who wrote from hotel about the plight of Pinoy workers during the Depression, when "No Dogs and Filipinos Allowed" signs could be seen in California.

The double Guatemala Theatre Foundation of Tony Espejo, awarded in laboratory cast at the St. Cecilia's Hall of the Schoolmen's College. It proved a successful choice which is more mature..."and less noisy" (as Espejo put it)—audience.

The plays included "Cafe Filipino," a musical drama; "Tarapalaka de Isabela," a feminist comedy; and "La Bamba," another adult drama set during the Vietnam war.

Rebagliati's "Late Nite Catechism," at the RCBC Plaza Theater was lots of fun, in a charismatic Catholic sort of way. Ernesto Antadito was in his element, as fast as her lines, as the nun, was crushing, ad-libbing and answering questions from the "class" (the audience).

There was one quip which was recalled a lot, however, when Amador created an imaginary scenario about a hit-and-run victim being rushed—"Only in the Philippines."

The Maestro de Manila High School Department management by Tanghalang Ateneo Bayanihan in honor of the legendary director, who is still active at 70.

This is now the home of the acclaimed Dulaang Sibol which Bayanihan founded. Here—the high school members are taught to act, audition, direct themselves, and create their own music and costumes. The key words are innovation and creativity, which lead to character formation.

The inaugural presentation was "Kalantas ng Kwer," written by "Eli Pagal" and his son Axel, a dark drama with music (dead pencil coming to grief (as in made or working).

The major dance companies—Ballet Philippines (BP), Philippine Ballet Theater (PBT) and Ballet Manila (BM)—came up with dazzling productions which will hold memories fondly.

"Tattoo" by Ballet Philippines' star choreographer, entertaining, with impressive dancing scenes. Philippine Ballet Theater's "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," which had an Asian premiere, was even better than PBT's "The Merry Widow" had even tried BP and Bob by Manila revamped their own versions of "The Nutcracker."

Students accompanied by parents and teachers flocked to the large Aliw and Star Theaters of the CCP Complex to applaud following Lisa Ricaforte, principal dancer of Dance Factory, the talents and capsule ballet of BM in "Swan Lake" and "The Nutcracker," and were rewarded with breathtaking lifts and leaps.

The year ended fittingly with the Ramon Obusen Folkloric Group's "Sanayo a Bailey" at the CCP, a joyous cavalcade of dances from the different regions.

PART Bayot, star of "Monalo," with writer Ricky Lee and composer Vincent de Jesus

The performing arts scene remained vibrant and innovative as ever

LEAH Mesoja in "The Nutcracker"

SCENES from Philippine Ballet Theater's "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"

Sentimental 'Heaven'

"The Five People You Meet in Heaven"
By Mitch Albom
Hyperion, New York,
2003, 196 pages

By Raul S. De Vera

The first novel from the author of 'Tuesdays with Morrie' is a compact, unabashedly melodramatic tale of an inspired little life

BECAUSE the story of Morrie Schwartz's last days with a former student seems so deceptively simple and yet profound at the same time, it is easy to forget that "Tuesdays with Morrie," Mitch Albom's best-selling 1997 book, is a true story. In fact, Albom, a columnist for the Detroit Free Press, notably also wrote "Fab Five," a sharp take on the Chris Webber-led University of Michigan hoops team that almost won it all in the early 1990s, as well as five other books, all of them non-fiction.

Now, Albom takes on a new challenge—his first novel.

This novel, "The Five People You Meet in Heaven," is meant in some ways to be follow-up to "Tuesdays." Like "Tuesdays," "Heaven" is compact and spare, the quintessence in Albom allowing him to tell his tale tastefully and with brevity that it is a decidedly different tale from his previous sweet books.

"Heaven" begins with an ending. Eddie a 83, a solitary maintenance worker at a State Pier, an amusement park that has clearly seen better days. The park prodigiously Eddie, dubbed "Eddie Maintenance" because that's what it says on his name patch. All those years, Eddie has laboured to keep these has machines safe for children. But an accident, unpreventable, unforeseeable, takes his life, and just like that, Eddie's in Heaven.

Or is he? At first, Eddie cannot understand what's happening to him except for two things: "Where is my worry," he asks. "Where is my pain?" This begins Eddie's interaction in Albom's vision of Heaven.

Essentially, Eddie must meet and talk to five people, some of whom he knows, others he does not, but all connected to him somehow, before he can move on. Everyone who takes this path goes through this.

Each person takes Eddie back to a part of his life, a long but, to his weary eyes, unremarkable and wasted life. Each person reveals something to Eddie that the tortured maintenance man did not know and about the pieces of his life begin to fit.

Not happy

It is not all happy. Some of the things that Eddie finds out almost break him. There are disconnections that stretch all the way back to his childhood, a period of time dominated by his hardworking but stoic father. It takes him to the field of war in the Philippines, where he stood side by side with fellow soldiers and witnessed death, courage and found himself changed forever.

It takes him back to his beloved, much-lamented wife Marguerite, whom he missed to the very end of his days. And it will take him in all that happened around him, the things he was a part of but never knew.

"Heaven" feels like a sequel to "Tuesdays" in that, while "Tuesdays" was about the wise words of a dying man, "Heaven" is what Albom sees as what happens immediately after one's death.

Additionally, it feels like "Heaven" is the embodiment, the fictional demonstration of the advice handed out by the late Morrie. Thus "Heaven" at about approximating the little, unsung things in life. It's about the satisfaction in a quiet life, the acceptance of what people are meant to do, even if it looks like a disappointment, a step down from one's dreams.

In that sense, "Heaven" is very much a book of inspiration as the story is no sheer and straightforward, most of the suspense and mystery is held in finding out who these five people Eddie is supposed to meet, and why he must meet them. Beyond that, it's a by-the-numbers story of looking back at one's life with open eyes.

But Albom handles it all with good if ligature language and an unabashed sense of sentimentality. Yes, he knows it's a bit too much and yes, he knows it's all so life-affirming. But that's exactly the point.

No darkness

Despite some tragedies, there is no darkness in this book. In fact, there's very little by way of ambiguity here. There isn't a lot of complexity or twists and surprises in "Heaven." Many readers will easily be able to guess whether or not Eddie manages to save the life of that little girl at the moment of his death. Even the final gambit, a final bad Morrie of a heart-tugger, could be seen coming.

"Heaven" can't even be considered a religious book. Instead, Albom takes what worked in "Tuesdays" and expands on them, using the life lessons as almost a fateful but not-exuberant. It may be a book of fiction marketed as a real life chronicle, but "Heaven" feels like a natural next step after "Tuesdays" and Albom conducts the book's events as such.

There may be some people who find this tale overly simplistic or perhaps a tad too contrived, but "Heaven" works because of its economy of writings. Albom leaves much to read between the lines and there are one to discern that, no more, no less.

This book is not the powerful, affecting tome that "Heaven" was; it is fictional and much more obvious. But in its own way, "Heaven" seems to blending heart on its book jackets and Albom tells a controlled, inspiring yarn about the redemption and final reward of an ordinary man after an ordinary life, about what's supposed to be important in the short life.

Because, in the end, Eddie may feel like a fictional makeover of Morrie, but reasons why he is just one of us. Mitch Albom still has words of wisdom to share and, for all those readers who were moved by "Tuesdays with Morrie" and perhaps even trailed down significant amounts of their cars after all these years, "The Five People You Meet in Heaven" makes sense, inspired and invites, all with a grand dollop of sentimentality but without any apologies, and apparently without any fear.

Available in hardcover at National Bookstore and Power Books.

Unique children's book on Christmas trimmings and arts and craft

THE CHILDREN'S book "Search For Christmas Tree Trees" has been released.

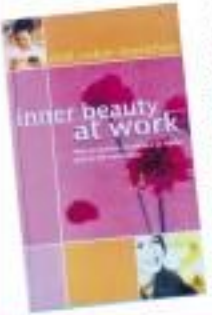
According to author Mila Reyeva Dumpit-Intes, of the Reyeva clan of General Emilio Aguinaldo fame, the book is an "Advent/Nanny Tale" that fires the child's fantasy imagination and creativity." It is about the adventures of Myra as she travels in search of Christmas tree ornaments.

The last 14 pages of the 112 page book feature an craft making where the family can have fun together making Christmas tree ornaments.

Dumpit-Intes is a former magazine publisher. She is also a designer of yarn craft, producer and designer of yarn bank craft and a peacock and landscape painter in oil. She has received an award from the Philippine Airlines-International Club for her Philippine Rolypoly Bunnies Program. She is a member of the Arts and Craft Club Phils., General Assembly Trade Union Association and Cora Book Club.

Call 8357289 or fax 8330355

Book on inner beauty released



"YOU'RE a woman on the go. With lots of work to do. Plans to set. Deadlines to meet. Chores to finish. Dreams to pursue. Are you satisfied with how you've been handling things? These lines can stop any busy woman like you and make you think.

In "Inner Beauty at Work," author Deb Baker Sharoun shows how you can pursue excellence at home or at work.

The author takes you through some of her own journeys and shares biblical perspectives she has learned along the way.

"Inner Beauty at Work" is the sequel to Inner Beauty. It is available in Catholic bookstores, National Book Store and Springs Bookstore.

Call 7250700 or 8918-4427 loc.

AFP's oldest retired general launches book

THE BOOK, "Musings of an Old Soldier," by General Lorenzo S. Tan (Ret.) was launched last Saturday, Dec. 27, at the Black Rock Golf and Country Club, Mandaluyong City.

Edited by Eleanor V. Guinto-Bautista and published by Impact Communications Corporation, the book is a compilation of Tan's essays, articles and letters during his 38 year military career.

At 99, Tan, a member of Class 1928 of the Philippine Military Academy is the oldest surviving retired general of the Philippines.

Tan was commanding general of the Philippine Army from 1957 to 1958. A lawyer, he was also a director of the National Bureau of Investigation at one time after his retirement from the military.